

# THE GILDED AGE

## Part II

United States History ACP  
Social Studies Department  
Wellesley High School  
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## **Section II: Big Business and Labor**

### **The Gilded Age: A Nation Transformed & An Age of Extremes**

*"As we view the achievement of aggregated (totaled) capital, we discover the existence of trusts, combinations and monopolies, while the citizen is struggling far in the rear or is trampled to death beneath an iron heel. Corporations, which should be the carefully restrained creatures of the law and servants of that people are fast becoming the people's masters."*

*-President Grover Cleveland, 1888*

#### **Reflect:**

**What is President Cleveland describing in this quote? What is the "iron heel?"**

#### **Overview:**

In our previous unit, we explored the settlement of the American West during the 1800's until the US Government declared the frontier officially closed in 1890. What was happening to the rest of the nation during this time period? There were profound changes that transformed the United States from an agrarian country to one of the leading industrial powers in the world. In 1880, for the first time in United States history, farmers were no longer the majority of working Americans. (That is why the traditional descriptions of typical American as a farmer doesn't make sense to us today!) America's future became tied to its development as an industrial society. As President Cleveland noted in the above quote, such a shift was not without its difficulties. The Gilded Age, as this time period is called, was known for its extremes in behavior and wealth. The nation searched for its identity among the swirl of differing forces.

#### **Essential Questions:**

- **What qualities make this era the "Gilded Age"?**
- **What is the relationship between the federal government, business and citizens during this period?**
- **What factors fueled the growth of the post Civil War economy and allowed for the emergence of monopolies?**
- **Why was there a need for government regulation in industry?**
- **The Great industrialist: Robber Barons or Captains of Industry?**
- **How did ideas of Social Darwinism and the Gospel of Wealth defend the disparities in wealth in the United States?**

## II

# ROBBER BARONS AND REBELS

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In the year 1877, the signals were given for the rest of the century: the black would be put back; the strikes of white workers would not be tolerated; the industrial and political elites of North and South would take hold of the country and organize the greatest march of economic growth in human history. They would do it with the aid of, and at the expense of, black labor, white labor, Chinese labor, European immigrant labor, female labor, rewarding them differently by race, sex, national origin, and social class, in such a way as to create separate levels of oppression—a skillful terracing to stabilize the pyramid of wealth.

Between the Civil War and 1900, steam and electricity replaced human muscle, iron replaced wood, and steel replaced iron (before the Bessemer process, iron was hardened into steel at the rate of 3 to 5 tons a day; now the same amount could be processed in 15 minutes). Machines could now drive steel tools. Oil could lubricate machines and light homes, streets, factories. People and goods could move by railroad, propelled by steam along steel rails; by 1900 there were 193,000 miles of railroad. The telephone, the typewriter, and the adding machine speeded up the work of business.

Machines changed farming. Before the Civil War it took 61 hours of labor to produce an acre of wheat. By 1900, it took 3 hours, 19 minutes. Manufactured ice enabled the transport of food over long distances, and the industry of meatpacking was born.

Steam drove textile mill spindles; it drove sewing machines. It came from coal. Pneumatic drills now drilled deeper into the earth for coal. In 1860, 14 million tons of coal were mined; by 1884 it was 100 million tons. More coal meant more steel, because coal furnaces converted iron

into steel; by 1880 a million tons of steel were being produced; by 1910 25 million tons. By now electricity was beginning to replace steam. Electrical wire needed copper, of which 30,000 tons were produced in 1880; 500,000 tons by 1910.

To accomplish all this required ingenious inventors of new processes and new machines, clever organizers and administrators of the new corporations, a country rich with land and minerals, and a huge supply of human beings to do the back-breaking, unhealthful, and dangerous work. Immigrants would come from Europe and China, to make the new labor force. Farmers unable to buy the new machinery or pay the new railroad rates would move to the cities. Between 1860 and 1910 New York grew from 850,000 to 4 million, Chicago from 110,000 to 2 million, Philadelphia from 650,000 to 1½ million.

In some cases the inventor himself became the organizer of businesses—like Thomas Edison, inventor of electrical devices. In other cases, the businessman compiled other people's inventions. In 1855 Gustavus Swift, a Chicago butcher who put together the ice-cooled meatway car with the ice-cooled warehouse to make the first national meatpacking company in 1885. James Duke used a new cigarette-rolling machine that could roll, paste, and cut tubes of tobacco into 100,000 cigarettes a day; in 1890 he combined the four biggest cigarette producers to form the American Tobacco Company.

While some multimillionaires started in poverty, most did not. A study of the origins of 303 textile, railroad, and steel executives of the 1870s showed that 90 percent came from middle- or upper-class families. The Horatio Alger stories of "rags to riches" were true for a few men, but mostly a myth, and a useful myth for control.

Most of the fortune building was done legally, with the collaboration of the government and the courts. Sometimes the collaboration had to be paid for. Thomas Edison promised New Jersey politicians \$1,000 each in return for favorable legislation. Daniel Drew and Jay Gould spent \$1 million to bribe the New York legislature to legalize their issue of \$8 million "watered stock" (stock not representing real value) on the Erie Railroad.

The first transcontinental railroad was built with blood, sweat, pellitics and thievery, out of the meeting of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads. The Central Pacific started on the West Coast going east; it spent \$200,000 in Washington on bribes to get 9 million acres of free land and \$24 million in bonds, and paid \$79 million, an overpayment of \$36 million, to a construction company which really was its own. The construction was done by three thousand Irish and ten thousand Chinese, over a period of four years, working for one or two dollars a day.

The Union Pacific started in Nebraska, going west. It had been given 12 million acres of free land and \$27 million in government bonds. It created the Credit Mobilier company and gave them \$94 million for construction when the actual cost was \$44 million. Shares were sold cheaply to Congressmen to prevent investigation. This was at the suggestion of Massachusetts Congressman Oakes Ames, a shovel manufacturer and director of Credit Mobilier, who said: "There is no difficulty in getting men to look after their own property." The Union Pacific used twenty thousand workers—war veterans and Irish immigrants, who had 5 miles of track a day and died by the hundreds in the heat, the cold, and the battles with Indians opposing the invasion of their territory.

Both railroads used longer, twisting routes to get subsidies from towns they went through. In 1869, amid music and speeches, the two hooked lines met in Utah.

The wild fraud on the railroads led to more control of railroad finances by bankers, who wanted more stability—profit by law rather than by theft. By the 1890s, most of the country's railway mileage was concentrated in six huge systems. Four of these were completely or partially controlled by the House of Morgan, and two others by the bankers Kuhn, Loeb, and Company.

J. P. Morgan had started before the war, as the son of a banker who began selling stocks for the railroads for good commissions. During the Civil War he bought five thousand rifles for \$3.50 each from an army arsenal, and sold them to a general in the field for \$22 each. The rifles were defective and would shoot off the thumbs of the soldiers using them. A congressional committee noted this in the small print of an obscure report, but a federal judge upheld the deal as the fulfillment of a valid legal contract.

Morgan had escaped military service in the Civil War by paying \$300 to a substitute. So did John D. Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, Philip Armour, Jay Gould, and James Mellon. Mellon's father had written to him that "a man may be a patriot without risking his own life or sacrificing his health. There are plenty of lives less valuable."

It was the firm of Drexel, Morgan and Company that was given a U.S. government contract to float a bond issue of \$260 million. The government could have sold the bonds directly; it chose to pay the bankers \$5 million in commission.

On January 2, 1889, as Gustavus Myers reports:

"A circular marked 'Private and Confidential' was issued by the three banking houses of Drexel, Morgan & Company, Brown Brothers &



Company and Kidder, Peabody & Company. The most painstaking care was exercised that this document should not find its way into the press or otherwise become public. . . . Why this fear? Because the circular was an invitation . . . to the great railroad magnates to assemble at Morgan's house, No. 219

Madison Avenue, there to form, in the phrase of the day, an iron-clad combination. . . . a compact which would efface competition among certain railroads, and unite those interests in an agreement by which the people of the United States would be bled even more effectively than before.

There was a human cost to this exciting story of financial ingenuity. That year, 1889, records of the Interstate Commerce Commission showed that 22,000 railroad workers were killed or injured.

In 1895 the gold reserve of the United States was depleted, while twenty-six New York City banks had \$129 million in gold in their vaults. A syndicate of bankers headed by J. P. Morgan & Company, August Belmont & Company, the National City Bank, and others offered to give the government gold in exchange for bonds. President Grover Cleveland agreed. The bankers immediately resold the bonds at higher prices, making \$18 million profit.

A journalist wrote: "If a man wants to buy beef, he must go to the butcher. . . . If Mr. Cleveland wants much gold, he must go to the banker."

While making his fortune, Morgan brought rationality and organization to the national economy. He kept the system stable. He said, "We do not want financial convulsions and have one thing one day and another thing another day." He linked railroads to one another, allowed them to banks, banks to insurance companies. By 1900, he controlled 100,000 miles of railroad, half the country's mileage.

Three insurance companies dominated by the Morgan group had a billion dollars in assets. They had \$50 million a year to invest—money given by ordinary people for their insurance policies. Louis Brandeis, describing this in his book *Other People's Money* (before he became a Supreme Court justice), wrote: "They control the people through the people's own money."

John D. Rockefeller started as a bookkeeper in Cleveland, became an oil merchant, accumulated money, and decided that, in the new industry of oil, who controlled the oil refineries controlled the industry. He bought his first oil refinery in 1862, and by 1870 set up Standard Oil Company of Ohio, made secret agreements with railroads to ship his oil with them if they gave him rebates—discounts—on their prices, and thus drove competitors out of business.

One independent refiner said: "If we did not sell out . . . we would be crushed out. . . . There was only one buyer on the market and we had to sell at their terms." Memos like this one passed among Standard Oil officials: "Wilkerson & Co. received car of oil Monday 13th. . . . Please turn another screw." A rival refinery in Buffalo was rocked by a small explosion arranged by Standard Oil officials with the refinery's chief mechanic.

The Standard Oil Company, by 1899, was a holding company which controlled the stock of many other companies. The capital was \$110 million, the profit was \$45 million a year, and John D. Rockefeller's fortune was estimated at \$200 million. Before long he would move into iron, copper, coal, shipping, and banking (Chase Manhattan Bank). Profits would be \$81 million a year, and the Rockefeller fortune would total two billion dollars.

Andrew Carnegie was a telegraph clerk at seventeen, then secretary to the head of the Pennsylvania Railroad, then broker in Wall Street selling railroad bonds for huge commissions, and was soon a millionaire. He went to London in 1872, saw the new Bessemer method of producing steel, and returned to the United States to build a million-dollar steel plant. Foreign competition was kept out by a high tariff conveniently set by Congress, and by 1880 Carnegie was producing 10,000 tons of steel a month, making \$1½ million a year in profit. By 1900 he was making \$40 million a year, and that year, at a dinner party, he agreed to sell his steel company to J. P. Morgan. He scribbled the price on a note: \$492,000,000.

Morgan then formed the U.S. Steel Corporation, combining Carnegie's corporation with others. He sold stocks and bonds for \$1300,000,000 (about 400 million more than the combined worth of the companies) and took a fee of 150 million for arranging the consolidation. How could dividends be paid to all those stockholders and bondholders? By making sure Congress passed tariffs keeping out foreign steel; by closing off competition and maintaining the price at \$28 a ton; and by working 200,000 men twelve hours a day for wages that barely kept their families alive.

And so it went, in industry after industry—shrewd, efficient businessmen building empires, choking out competition, maintaining high prices, keeping wages low, using government subsidies. These industries were the first beneficiaries of the "welfare state." By the turn of the century, American Telephone and Telegraph had a monopoly of the nation's telephone system, International Harvester made 85 percent of all farm machinery, and in every other industry resources became concentrated,

controlled. The banks had interests in so many of these monopolies as to create an interlocking network of powerful corporation directors each of whom sat on the boards of many other corporations. According to a Senate report of the early twentieth century, Morgan at his peak sat on the board of forty-eight corporations; Rockefeller, thirty-seven corporations.

At the same time the government

**Class:**

- Howard Zinn, 1999

*Please read pages 253-258 of this chapter and answer the following question thoughtfully. As you are reading please think about if Zinn might have a bias or an agenda.*

1. What examples does Zinn provide of the changing American environment between the Civil War and 1900? (253)

2. How was all this development accomplished? (254)

3. What was the result of fraud in the building of the transcontinental railroad? (255)

4. How did J.P. Morgan bring rationality/organization to the national economy?(256)

5. What did John D. Rockefeller realize about oil? What did he do as a result? (256-257)

6. How was the government involved in the growth of these industries (JP Morgan, Rockefeller, Carnegie)? (255-257)

7. Describe the cycle Zinn lays out at the bottom of pg 257.

8. What does it mean to have a monopoly on something?

# The Novels of Horatio Alger

A young boy, perhaps an orphan, makes his perilous way through life on the rough streets of the city by selling newspapers or peddling matches. One day, his energy and determination catches the eye of a wealthy man, who gives him a chance to improve himself. Through honesty, charm, hard work, and aggressiveness, the boy rises in the world to become a successful man.

That, in a nutshell, is the story that Horatio Alger presented to his vast public in novel after novel—over 100 of them in all—for over forty years. During his lifetime, according to rough estimates, Americans bought over 100 million copies of his novels. After his death in 1899, his books (and others written in his name) continued to sell at an astonishing rate. Even today, when the books themselves are largely forgotten, the name Horatio Alger has come to represent the idea of individual advancement through (in a phrase Alger coined) “pluck and luck.”

Alger was born in 1832 into a middle-class New England family, attended Harvard, and spent a short time as a Unitarian minister. He himself never experienced the hardships he later chronicled. In the mid-1850s, he turned to writing stories and books, and continued to do so for the rest of his life. His most famous novel, *Ragged Dick*, was published in 1868; but there were many others that were almost identical to it: *Tom, the Bootblack*; *Sink or Swim*; *Jed, the Poorhouse Boy*; *Phil, the Fiddler*; *Andy Grant's Pluck*. Most of his books were aimed at young people, and almost all of them were fables of a young man's rise “from rags to riches.” The purpose of his writing, he claimed, was twofold. He wanted to “exert a salutary influence upon the class of whom [I] was writing, by setting before them inspiring examples of what energy, ambi-



**A NEWSBOY'S STORY** Alger's novels were even more popular after his death in 1899 than they had been in his lifetime. This reprint of one of his many “rags-to-riches” stories—about the rise of a New York newsboy to wealth and success—includes in the background a rendering of the “Met Life Building,” an early skyscraper built in 1909.

tion, and an honest purpose may achieve.” He also wanted to show his largely middle-class readers “the life and experiences of the friendless and vagrant children to be found in all our cities.”

But Alger's intentions probably had little to do with the success of his books. Most Americans of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were attracted to Alger because his stories helped them to believe in one of the most cherished of all their national myths: that it is possible for individuals to rise in the world with willpower and hard work, that anyone can become a “self-made man.” That belief was all the more important in the late nineteenth

century when the rise of large-scale corporate industrialization was making it increasingly difficult for individuals to control their own fates.

Alger placed great emphasis on the moral qualities of his heroes; their success was a reward for their virtue. But many of his readers ignored the moral message and clung simply to the image of sudden and dramatic success. After the author's death, his publishers responded to that yearning by abridging many of Alger's works to eliminate the parts of his stories where the heroes do good deeds. Instead, they emphasized the success of Alger's heroes in rising in the world.

Alger himself had very mixed feelings about the new industrial order he described. His books were meant to reveal not just the opportunities for advancement it sometimes created, but also its cruelty. That was one reason that in almost all his books, his heroes triumphed not just because of their own virtues or efforts, but because of some amazing stroke of luck. To Alger, at least, the modern age did not guarantee success through hard work alone; there had to be some providential assistance as well. Over time, however, Alger's admirers came to ignore his own misgivings about industrialism and to portray his books purely as celebrations of (and justifications for) laissez-faire capitalism and the accumulation of wealth.

An example of the transformation of Alger into a symbol of individual achievement is the Horatio Alger Award, established in 1947 by the American Schools and Colleges Association to honor “living individuals who by their own efforts had pulled themselves up by their bootstraps in the American tradition.” Among its recipients have been Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan, Evangelist Billy Graham, and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

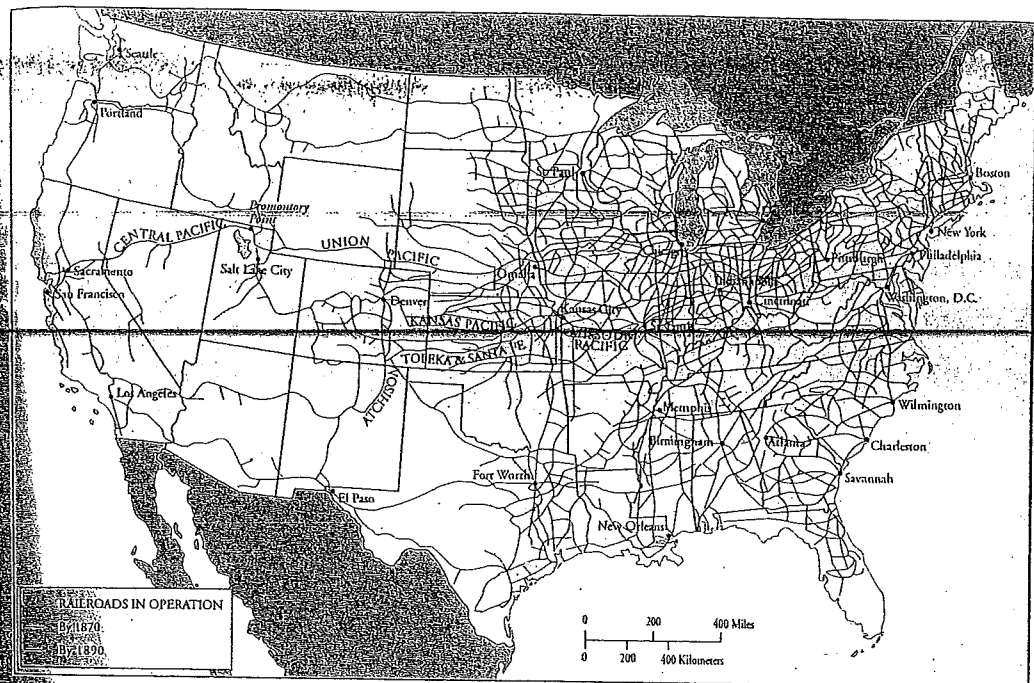
and schools, institutions he believed would help the poor to help themselves.

The notion of private wealth as a public blessing existed alongside another popular concept: the notion of great wealth as something available to all. Russell H. Conwell,

a Baptist minister, became the most prominent spokesman for the idea by delivering one lecture, “Acres of Diamonds,” more than 6,000 times between 1880 and 1900. Conwell told a series of stories, which he claimed were true, of

Russell Conwell





**RAILROADS, 1870-1890** This map illustrates the rapid expansion of railroads in the late nineteenth century. In 1870, there was already a dense network of rail lines in the Northeast and Middle West, illustrated here by the red lines. The green lines show the further expansion of rail coverage between 1870 and 1890, much of it in the South and the areas west of the Mississippi River. ♦ Why were railroads so essential to the nation's economic growth in these years?



For an interactive version of this map go to [www.mhhe.com/brinkley12ch17maps](http://www.mhhe.com/brinkley12ch17maps)

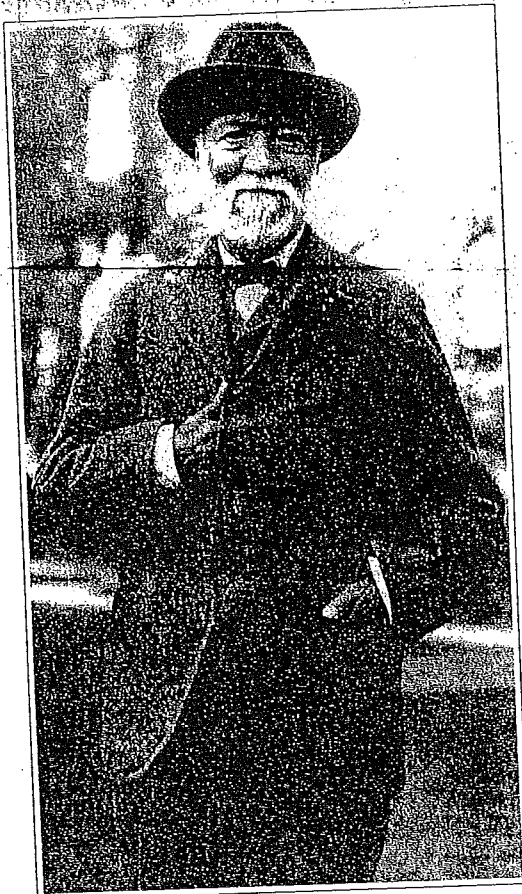
consider the purchase of stock a good investment even if they were not themselves involved in the business whose stock they were purchasing. What made the practice appealing was that investors had only "limited liability"—that is, they risked only the amount of their investment; they were not liable for any debts the corporation might accumulate beyond that. The ability to sell stock to a broad public made it possible for entrepreneurs to raise vast sums of capital and undertake great projects. The Pennsylvania Railroad and others were among the first to adopt the new corporate form of organization. It quickly spread beyond the railroad industry. In steel, the central figure was Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who had worked his way up from modest beginnings and in 1873 opened his own steelworks in Pittsburgh. He dominated the industry. His methods were much like those of other industrial titans. He cut costs and prices by striking deals with the railroads and then fought off rivals who could not compete with him. With his associate Henry Clay Frick, he bought up coal mines

and leased part of the Mesabi iron range in Minnesota, operated a fleet of ore ships on the Great Lakes, and acquired railroads. Ultimately, Carnegie controlled the processing of his steel from mine to market. He financed his undertakings not only out of his own profits but out of the sale of stock. Then, in 1901, he sold out for \$450 million to the banker J. Pierpont Morgan, who merged the Carnegie interests with others to create the giant United States Steel Corporation—a \$1.4 billion enterprise that controlled almost two-thirds of the nation's steel production.

There were similar developments in other industries. Gustavus Swift developed a relatively small Chicago meatpacking company into a great national corporation, in part because of profits he earned selling to the military in the Civil War. Isaac Singer patented a sewing machine in 1851 and created I. M. Singer and Company, one of the first modern manufacturing corporations.

Many of the corporate organizations developed a new approach to management. Large, national business enterprises needed more systematic administrative structures than the limited, local ventures of the past.





**ANDREW CARNEGIE** Carnegie was one of a relatively small number of great industrialists of the late nineteenth century who genuinely rose "from rags to riches." Born in Scotland, he came to the United States in 1848, at the age of thirteen, and soon found work as a messenger in a Pittsburgh telegraph office. His skill in learning to transcribe telegraphic messages (he became one of the first telegraphers in the country able to take messages by sound) brought him to the attention of a Pennsylvania Railroad official, and before he was twenty, he had begun his ascent to the highest ranks of industry. After the Civil War, he shifted his attention to the growing iron industry; in 1873 he invested all his assets in the development of the first American steel mills. Two decades later he was one of the wealthiest men in the world. In 1901 he abruptly resigned from his businesses and spent the remaining years of his life as a philanthropist. By the time of his death in 1919, he had given away some \$350 million. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)

#### New Managerial Techniques

As a result, corporate leaders introduced a set of managerial techniques—the genesis of modern business administration—that relied on the division of responsibilities, a carefully designed hierarchy of control, modern cost-accounting procedures, and



**JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER** Rockefeller's Standard Oil company became perhaps the largest and most powerful monopoly in America in the late nineteenth century, and Rockefeller himself became one of the nation's wealthiest and most controversial men. (Culver Pictures, Inc.)

perhaps above all a new breed of business executive: the "middle manager," who formed a layer of command between workers and owners. Beginning in the railroad corporations, these new management techniques moved quickly into virtually every area of large-scale industry. Efficient administrative capabilities helped make possible another major feature of the modern corporation: consolidation.

#### Consolidating Corporate America

Businessmen created large, consolidated organizations primarily through two methods. One was "horizontal integration"—the combining of a number of firms engaged in the same enterprise into a single corporation. The consolidation of many different railroad lines into one company was an example. Another method, which became popular in the 1890s, was "vertical integration"—the taking over of all the different businesses on which a company relied for its primary function (as in the case of Carnegie Steel).

Horizontal and Vertical Integration



The most celebrated corporate empire of the late nineteenth century was John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil. A great combination created through both horizontal and vertical integration. Shortly after the Civil War, Rockefeller launched a refining company in Cleveland and immediately began trying to eliminate his competition. Allying himself with other wealthy capitalists, he proceeded methodically to buy out competing refineries. In 1870, he formed the Standard Oil Company of Ohio; within a few years it had acquired twenty of the twenty-five refineries in Cleveland, as well as plants in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore. So far, Rockefeller had expanded only horizontally. But soon he began expanding vertically as well. He built his own barrel factories, terminal warehouses, and pipelines. Standard Oil owned its own freight cars and developed its own marketing organization. By the 1880s, Rockefeller had established such dominance within the petroleum industry that to much of the nation he served as the leading symbol of monopoly. He controlled access to 90 percent of the refined oil in the United States.

Rockefeller and other industrialists saw consolidation as a way to cope with what they believed was the greatest curse of the modern economy: "cutthroat competition." Most businessmen claimed to believe in free enterprise and a competitive marketplace, but in fact they feared the existence of too many competing firms, convinced that substantial competition could spell instability and ruin for all. A successful enterprise, many capitalists believed (but did not say publicly), was one that could eliminate or absorb its competitors.

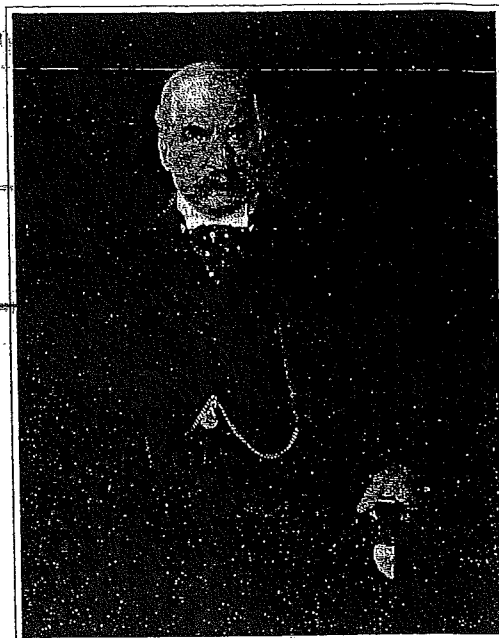
As the movement toward combination accelerated, new vehicles emerged to facilitate it. The railroads began making so-called pool arrangements—informal agreements among various companies to stabilize rates and divide markets (arrangements that would in later years be known as cartels). But the pools did not work very well. If even a few firms in an industry were unwilling to cooperate (as was almost always the case), the pool arrangements collapsed.

### The Trust and the Holding Company

The failure of the pools led to new techniques of consolidation resting less on cooperation than on centralized control. At first, the most successful such technique was the creation of the "trust"—pioneered by Standard Oil in the early 1880s and perfected by the banker J. P. Morgan. Over time, the word "trust" became a term for any great economic combination. But the trust was in fact a particular kind of organization. Under a trust agreement, stockholders in individual corporations transferred their stocks to a small group of trustees in exchange for shares in the trust itself. Owners of trust certificates

The Trust Agreement

exchange for shares in the trust itself. Owners of trust certificates



**J. PIERPONT MORGAN** This arresting 1903 portrait by the great photographer Alfred Steichen captures something of the intimidating power of J. Pierpont Morgan, the most powerful financier in America. This photograph is sometimes known as the "dagger portrait," because Morgan appears to be holding a knife in his left hand. In fact, the shiny object is the arm of his chair. (*The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY*)

often had no direct control over the decisions of the trustees; they simply received a share of the profits of the combination. The trustees themselves, on the other hand, might literally own only a few companies but could exercise effective control over many.

In 1889, the state of New Jersey helped produce a third form of consolidation by changing its laws of incorporation to permit companies actually to buy up other companies. Other states soon followed. That made the trust unnecessary and permitted actual corporate mergers. Rockefeller, for example, quickly relocated Standard Oil to New Jersey and created there what became known as a "holding company"—a central corporate body that would buy up the stock of various members of the Standard Oil trust and establish direct, formal ownership of the corporations in the trust.

By the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of corporate consolidation, 1 percent of the corporations in America were able to control more than 33 percent of the manufacturing. A system of economic organization was emerging that lodged enormous

Rapid Corporate Consolidation

power in the hands of a very few men: the great bankers of New York such as J. P. Morgan, industrial titans such as Rockefeller (who himself gained control of a major bank), and others.

Whether or not this relentless concentration of economic power was the only way or the best way to promote industrial expansion became a major source of debate in America. But it is clear that, whatever else they may have done, the industrial giants of the era were responsible for substantial economic growth. They were integrating operations, cutting costs, creating a great industrial infrastructure, stimulating new markets, creating jobs for a vast new pool of unskilled workers, and opening the way to large-scale mass production. They were also creating the basis for some of the greatest public controversies of their era.

**\* STOP \***

## CAPITALISM AND ITS CRITICS

The rise of big business was not without its critics. Farmers and workers saw in the growth of the new corporate power centers a threat to notions of a republican society in which wealth and authority were widely distributed. Middle-class critics pointed to the corruption that the new industrial titans seemed to produce in their own enterprises and in local, state, and national politics. The growing criticisms challenged the captains of industry to defend the new corporate economy, to convince the public (and themselves) that it was compatible with the ideology of individualism and equal opportunity that had long been central to the American self-image.

### The "Self-Made Man"

The rationale for modern capitalism rested squarely on the older ideology of individualism. The new industrial economy, its defenders argued, was not reducing opportunities for individual advancement, but expanding them. It was providing every individual with a chance to succeed and attain great wealth.

There was an element of truth in such claims, but only a small one. Before the Civil War there had been few millionaires in America; by 1892

Myth of the Self-Made Man

there were more than 4,000. Some were in fact what almost all millionaires claimed to be: "self-made men." Andrew Carnegie had worked as a bobbin boy in a Pittsburgh cotton mill; John D. Rockefeller had begun as a clerk in a Cleveland commission house; E. H. Harriman, a great railroad tycoon, had begun as a broker's office boy. But most of the new business tycoons had begun their careers from positions of wealth and privilege.

Nor was their rise to power and prominence always a result simply of hard work and ingenuity, as they liked to claim. It was also a result of ruthlessness, arrogance, and, at times, rampant corruption. The railroad magnate



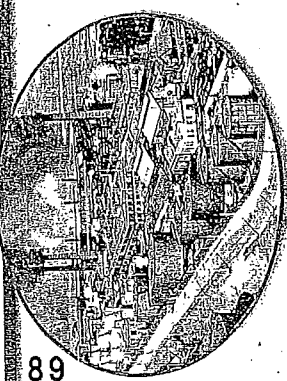
**"MODERN COLOSSUS OF (RAIL) ROADS"** Known as the "Commodore," accumulated one's fortunes by consolidating several large railroad control in the 1860s. His name became a synonym for enormous wealth, but also (in the eyes of many) corporate power—as suggested in this cartoon astride his empire and manipulating its parts.

Cornelius Vanderbilt expressed the attitude of corporate tycoons with his belligerent care about the law? H'aint I got the son William, with his oft-quoted statement: "damned." Industrialists made large firms to politicians, political parties, and governments for assistance and support. Not, politicians responded as they had. Standard Oil did everything to the Oil refine it. A member of the Pennsylvania Railroad has more business act." During the notorious "Erie War" Cornelius Vanderbilt battled Jay Gould for control of the Erie Railroad, both offered lavish bribes to members of the legislature. The market price of legislation was \$15,000 a head. One enterprising

# NEW WAYS OF DOING BUSINESS

The rise of the Standard Oil Company marked the beginning of a brand new way of building and conducting business in America. Many, though not all, of John D. Rockefeller's business practices at Standard Oil are part of mainstream corporate culture in the U.S. today. In 1904, journalist Ida Tarbell wrote, "It was the first in the field, and it has furnished the methods, the charter, and the traditions of its followers." Believing that a mix of small and large companies produced chaos and instability in prices and supplies, Rockefeller pioneered new techniques for organizing the oil industry to create a more stable and seamless business environment.

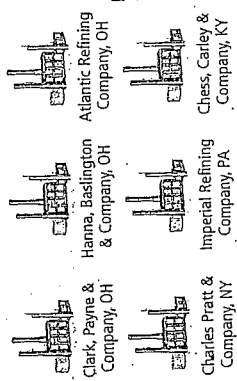
Through creativity and hard work, Rockefeller rose from a modest background to become the world's first billionaire. From his first paycheck he gave 10 percent of his earnings to his church. By the time he died, he had given away hundreds of millions of dollars.



▲ Standard Oil became a dominant symbol of the bustling American economy. At its height, the company controlled 90 percent of the nation's oil industry.

## HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION

Rockefeller bought up rival businesses in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York to gain more control of the oil-refining industry. One of Rockefeller's harshest critics led protests against the growing power of Standard Oil—only to take a job there years later.



## VERTICAL INTEGRATION

Rockefeller next sought to turn Standard Oil into a kind of empire. He invested in industries related to oil production, including pipelines, tank cars, oil barrels, railroads, and marketing companies. By taking control of the entire supply chain, Rockefeller was able to exert almost complete control over competitors.

Oil wells/Pipelines



Tank Cars/Railroads



Retail outlets



Purchased by Rockefeller



Standard Oil Company

## Why It Matters

Rockefeller's methods—from advertising (below) to buying out competitors—changed the American business climate. In turn, big business transformed American society itself in the twentieth century, becoming the accepted meal for the nation to conduct its business and produce and sell its goods. It also ushered in the globalization that would become the striking characteristic of twenty-first century life.

### THE STANDARD OIL CO.



## Thinking Critically

In the late 1800s, people debated the impact of corporations, call their leaders either "robber barons" or "captains of industry." Are such debates still relevant today?

**History Interactive**  
For: More about big business  
Web Code: ncp-1320



**Microsoft**

## Conquer the Market

[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rockefellers/sfeature/sf\\_2.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/rockefellers/sfeature/sf_2.html)

### OBJECT:

Congratulations! Due to your reputation as a ruthless and skilled negotiator, you have been selected as J.D. Rockefeller's business manager. J.D.R. has hired you to create a monopoly for Standard Oil by purchasing all your competitors' companies. But your task isn't easy – to win you must gain control of 100% of oil production. Good Luck!

### DETAILS:

- Your allotted working capital is \$100,000.
- At the start of the game, your company controls 24% of production.
- To learn about a company, open its file.
- You can make an offer on a company from within the profile or by selecting "make an offer" on the main screen.
- You have THREE chances to make an acceptable bid for a company. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> underbid, the company will no longer accept any offers and you must start over!
- You can select from 5 different tactics to lower a company's selling price. Depending on which tactic you chose, it can decrease the selling price anywhere from 10% to 40%.
- You can use each tactic only once, so make your selections carefully. Use the profile information to help you make your decisions.

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## VI. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE BUSINESSMAN



If American businessmen at times employed harsh methods in accumulating wealth and expanding their industry, they justified their behavior by proclaiming, philosophically, that they operated in accordance with the laws of God and nature. The remaining vestiges of an old-time Puritanism in the American mind which had accustomed religious people to look for a sign of God's grace came to their aid. According to this belief the Creator, in His infinite wisdom, guided the fortunes of mankind according to His own mysterious design, favoring a few with wealth and the multitude with the miseries of poverty. Wealth was a sign of God's benevolence—an indication that He had smiled upon that particular person or class. Envy of the fortunate might prompt protest, but this was an expression of depraved, evil blasphemy to be properly denounced from the pulpit.

Selected from a wide choice of evidence, one incident in the career of John D. Rockefeller spotlights this widely accepted doctrine. When a religious conference received an announcement of the initial check from Rockefeller for the establishment of a university at Chicago, its members rose and in unison sang "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow."<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter the multimillionaire explained his benevolence with, "The good Lord gave me the money, and how could I withhold it from Chicago?"<sup>2</sup>

The theory of classical economics asserting that an economy operates according to natural economic laws likewise gave broad intellectual support to the businessman. It was a faith that a national economy functions smoothly, resulting in equilibrium, only when the mechanical laws of nature are allowed to work

<sup>1</sup> Allan Nevins, *John D. Rockefeller* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), II, p. 228.  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.

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### The American Scene: 1860 to the Present

freely without the interference of outside artificial forces. Laws such as freedom of contract, supply and demand, diminishing returns, among others, operate favorably for the creation of national prosperity, not by the Christian laying on of hands, but by hands off—"laissez-faire."

The philosophy of Social Darwinism, unfolded in a series of volumes by Herbert Spencer, also offered scientific justification for the businessman's favorable position in society. In the biological world a species is selected by nature for survival because it possesses superior physical qualities which allow it to adapt successfully to the trying conditions of the environment. This theory, transferred to the economic world, asserted that the wealthy businessman had secured his favorable position, not by sculduggery, but by having those qualities which allowed him to emerge victoriously in the struggle of the market place. These sterling qualities were perseverance, hard work, good judgment, grit and stick-to-itiveness. "Work and save if you will win the battle of life" was their motto. On the other hand, the poor were supposedly shiftless, lazy and complaining, could not follow orders and, when they received a dollar, instead of saving it for investment capital, spent it to gratify a capricious desire—usually in some saloon. The poverty of the poor, according to this philosophy, was the natural condition of those who, because of unfitness, failed in the struggle.

Social Darwinism became the respectable philosophy of this generation. Frederick A. P. Barnard, president of Columbia University, evaluated Spencer as the greatest philosopher since Aristotle. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., however, was so exasperated because these ideas so thoroughly controlled the thinking of his colleagues that he admonished them in the dissenting opinion in *Lochner v. New York* (1905), saying that "the Fourteenth Amendment does not enact Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics*."

## How Big Businessmen Justified Their Acts

One of the important books of the nineteenth century was Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. This work described all life as a struggle in which only the fittest individuals managed to survive. The result was a process of natural selection of the best specimens and a gradual evolution of creatures into more successful organisms. This view of animals fighting each other for a limited food supply had a great impact on the thinking of nineteenth-century businessmen.

Today we do not approve of John D. Rockefeller's forcing his competitors out of business by getting secret rebates from the railroad. In his day, however, businessmen saw this activity as a part of the natural struggle for survival. The world of business was like the jungle: if a man did not fight, he would be crushed. Only the strongest or swiftest stayed alive — or in the case of businessmen — only the shrewdest or toughest ended up millionaires. It is important to understand this point of view in order to see the post-Civil War years in clear perspective. It explains how the Rockefellers, the Carnegies, the Morgans, and the Vanderbilts could put together their economic empires ruthlessly but with clear consciences.

In the following brief selections we have quoted two statements arguing this position. The first is from Andrew Carnegie's "The Gospel of Wealth" (1889). Carnegie began as a Scottish immigrant and rose to be a fabulously wealthy steel manufacturer.

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THE price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still, for it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development, which brings improved conditions in its train. But, whether the law be benign or not, we must say of it, as we say of the change in the conditions of men to which we have referred: It is here; we cannot evade it; no substitutes for it have been found; and while the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We accept and welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial and commercial, in the hands of a few, and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race. Having accepted these, it follows that there must be great scope for the exercise of special ability in the merchant and in the manufacturer who has to conduct affairs upon a great scale. ¶¶

The next statement is by William Graham Sumner, a professor of economics at Yale, who wrote about 1880:

~~~~~

PRIVATE property . . . produces inequalities between men. The struggle for existence is aimed against nature. It is from her niggardly hand that we have to wrest the satisfactions for our needs, but our fellow-men are our competitors for the meager supply. Competition, therefore, is a law of nature. Nature is entirely neutral; she submits to him who most energetically and resolutely assails her. She grants her rewards to the fittest, therefore, without regard to other considerations of any kind. If, then, there be liberty, men get from her just in proportion to their works, and their having and enjoying are just in proportion to their being and their doing. Such is the system of nature. If we do not like it, and if we try to amend it, there is only one way in which we can do it. We can take from the better and give to the worse. We can deflect the penalties of those who have done ill and throw them on those who have done better. We can take the rewards from those who have done better and give them to those who have done worse. We shall thus lessen the inequalities. We shall favor the survival of the unfittest, and we shall accomplish this by destroying liberty. Let it be understood that we cannot go outside of this alternative: liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest; not-liberty, equality, survival of the unfittest. The former carries society forward and favors all its best members; the latter carries society downwards and favors all its worst members. ¶¶

### A FEW VERY WEALTHY PEOPLE

John J. Ingalls, U.S. senator from Kansas, gave the following speech to the Senate, January 14, 1891:

There are in the United States two hundred persons who have an aggregate of more than \$20,000,000 each. . . . Four hundred persons possess \$10,000,000 each, 1,000 persons \$5,000,000 each, 2,000 persons \$2,500,000 each, 6,000 persons \$1,000,000 each, and 15,000 persons \$500,000 each, making a total of 31,000 people who possess \$36,250,000,000.

Mr. President, it is the most appalling statement that ever fell upon moral ears. It is, so far as the results of democracy as a social and political experiment are concerned, the most terrible commentary that ever was recorded in the book of time. . . .

Our population is 62,500,000 and by some means . . . less than a two thousandth part of our population have obtained possession, and have kept out of the penitentiary in spite of the means they have adopted to acquire it, of more than one half of the entire accumulated wealth of the country.

It has been chiefly acquired by men who have contributed little to the material welfare of the country, [but] . . . by the wrecking of the fortunes of innocent men, women, and children; by jugglery, by book-keeping, by financiering, by . . . speculations, —and this process is going on with frightful and constantly accelerating rapidity.

What conditions exist?	Why is this a problem?
What is the cause of the problem?	What are some possible solutions?
If nothing is done, what will happen?	What solution do you recommend? What are the likely consequences?

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## Modern History Sourcebook: Andrew Carnegie: The Gospel of Wealth, 1889

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*Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a massively successful business man - his wealth was based on the provision of iron and steel to the railways, but also a man who recalled his radical roots in Scotland before his immigration to the United States. To resolve what might seem to be contradictions between the creation of wealth, which he saw as proceeding from immutable social laws, and social provision he came up with the notion of the "gospel of wealth". He lived up to his word, and gave away his fortune to socially beneficial projects, most famously by funding libraries. His approval of death taxes might surprise modern billionaires!*

The problem of our age is the administration of wealth, so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship. The conditions of human life have not only been changed, but revolutionized, within the past few hundred years. In former days there was little difference between the dwelling, dress, food, and environment of the chief and those of his retainers. . . . The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measures the change which has come with civilization.

This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is well, nay, essential for the progress of the race, that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, and for all the refinements of civilization, rather than that none should be so. Much better this great irregularity than universal squalor. Without wealth there can be no Maecenas [Note: a rich Roman patron of the arts]. The "good old times" were not good old times. Neither master nor servant was as well situated then as to day. A relapse to old conditions would be disastrous to both-not the least so to him who serves-and would sweep away civilization with it....

...

We start, then, with a condition of affairs under which the best interests of the race are promoted, but which inevitably gives wealth to the few. Thus far, accepting conditions as they exist, the situation can be surveyed and pronounced good. The question then arises-and, if the foregoing be correct, it is the only question with which we have to deal-What is the proper mode of administering wealth after the laws upon which civilization is founded have thrown it into the hands of the few? And it is of this great question that I believe I offer the true solution. It will be understood that fortunes are here spoken of, not moderate sums saved by many years of effort, the returns from which are required for the comfortable maintenance and education of families. This is not wealth, but only competence, which it should be the aim of all to acquire.

There are but three modes in which surplus wealth can be disposed of. It can be left to the families of



the decedents; or it can be bequeathed for public purposes; or, finally, it can be administered during their lives by its possessors. Under the first and second modes most of the wealth of the world that has reached the few has hitherto been applied. Let us in turn consider each of these modes. The first is the most injudicious. In monarchial countries, the estates and the greatest portion of the wealth are left to the first son, that the vanity of the parent may be gratified by the thought that his name and title are to descend to succeeding generations unimpaired. The condition of this class in Europe today teaches the futility of such hopes or ambitions. The successors have become impoverished through their follies or from the fall in the value of land.... Why should men leave great fortunes to their children? If this is done from affection, is it not misguided affection? Observation teaches that, generally speaking, it is not well for the children that they should be so burdened. Neither is it well for the state. Beyond providing for the wife and daughters moderate sources of income, and very moderate allowances indeed, if any, for the sons, men may well hesitate, for it is no longer questionable that great sums bequeathed oftener work more for the injury than for the good of the recipients. Wise men will soon conclude that, for the best interests of the members of their families and of the state, such bequests are an improper use of their means.

...

As to the second mode, that of leaving wealth at death for public uses, it may be said that this is only a means for the disposal of wealth, provided a man is content to wait until he is dead before it becomes of much good in the world.... The cases are not few in which the real object sought by the testator is not attained, nor are they few in which his real wishes are thwarted....

The growing disposition to tax more and more heavily large estates left at death is a cheering indication of the growth of a salutary change in public opinion.... Of all forms of taxation, this seems the wisest. Men who continue hoarding great sums all their lives, the proper use of which for public ends would work good to the community, should be made to feel that the community, in the form of the state, cannot thus be deprived of its proper share. By taxing estates heavily at death, the state marks its condemnation of the selfish millionaire's unworthy life.

... This policy would work powerfully to induce the rich man to attend to the administration of wealth during his life, which is the end that society should always have in view, as being that by far most fruitful for the people....

There remains, then, only one mode of using great fortunes: but in this way we have the true antidote for the temporary unequal distribution of wealth, the reconciliation of the rich and the poor—a reign of harmony—another ideal, differing, indeed from that of the Communist in requiring only the further evolution of existing conditions, not the total overthrow of our civilization. It is founded upon the present most intense individualism, and the race is prepared to put it in practice by degrees whenever it pleases. Under its sway we shall have an ideal state, in which the surplus wealth of the few will become, in the best sense, the property of the many, because administered for the common good, and this wealth, passing through the hands of the few, can be made a much more potent force for the elevation of our race than if it had been distributed in small sums to the people themselves. Even the poorest can be made to see this, and to agree that great sums gathered by some of their fellowcitizens and spent for public purposes, from which the masses reap the principal benefit, are more valuable to them than if scattered among them through the course of many years in trifling amounts.

...

This, then, is held to be the duty of the man of Wealth: First, to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him; and after doing so to consider all surplus revenues which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial result for the community-the man of wealth thus becoming the sole agent and trustee for his poorer brethren, bringing to their service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer-doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves.

Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," *North American Review*, 148, no. 391 (June 1889): 653, 657-62.

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[halsall@murray.fordham.edu](mailto:halsall@murray.fordham.edu)

Answer the following on a  
SPOP -

1. What do you believe motivated Andrew Carnegie to write "The Gospel of Wealth"?
2. What obligations did Carnegie believe the wealthy had to society?

## Labor Organization in the Gilded Age Handout E

**Task:**

You will be assigned one of the below labor unions. You will be conducting outside research to gain knowledge on your assigned union or movement to be used in class. You will get the information from the Junior Thesis Wiki.

Junior Thesis Wiki URL:

<http://whsresearch.wikispaces.com/Junior+Thesis#toc5>

1. National Labor Union
2. Knights of Labor
3. American Federation of Labor
4. Industrial Workers of the World

1. Each group is required to get at least three *different* sources from two different databases under the heading "resources for background information" and at least two *different* sources under the heading "primary sources."  
(For a total of 5 sources/group)
2. Read and annotate your sources and bring them with you to class.

## Labor Unions of the Gilded Age

Union	Key Figure	Key Ideas	Motto
National Labor Union			
Knights of Labor			
American Federation of Labor			
Industrial Workers of the World			

Name:

US32  
Berenson/Tallervi

## The Richest Man in the World: Andrew Carnegie WGBH: The American Experience

1. Carnegie saw the promise of America realized in:

2. How did workers feel about this vision?

---

3. What was Andrew Carnegie's published position on the rights of labor?

4. What was the view of his partner, Henry Clay Frick?

5. Carnegie's views on labor were put to the test at his Edgar Thomson Works. Why?

6. How did Carnegie resolve this situation?

7. What did Carnegie give to the town of Braddock, PA - home to Edgar Thomson Steel works?

8. What was this library a "testimony" of?

9. At Homestead, the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel workers was:

10. How did Henry Clay Frick handle the strike of workers in his coke plant?

11. Carnegie and Frick introduced modern machinery and technology at Homestead. What was the result of this?

How did this affect the union?

12. How workers and the Mayor of Homestead feel about Carnegie's power and wealth?

13. In the spring of 1892, what did Carnegie and Frick decide to do?

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14. If Frick's terms were not accepted, what did Carnegie instruct him to do?

15. What did Frick do to begin the process to eliminate the union at Homestead?

16. While Carnegie was in Scotland, what did he "gamble" about the situation at homestead?

17. After Frick locked out 1100 workers, what did he plan to do next?

18. How did the workers feel about the property of the steel mill?

19. Who were the Pinkerton guards? Why did Frick call them in?

20. What happened once the Pinkertons arrived at Homestead?

21. Who won the battle?

22. When the workers refused to surrender the mill to the sheriff, what happened?

23. What was the effect of the Homestead Strike on Carnegie?

24. What two desires was Carnegie torn between?

24. What was the effect of the Homestead Strike on the workers?

## Labor Organization During the Gilded Age

Excerpted from: *Death in the Haymarket* by James Green

Leading Illinois Republicans who gathered at Lincoln's grave on May 4, 1865, rejoiced that free labor had triumphed over the slave system in that great war now won. They believed a new nation had emerged from the bloody conflict, new because now all of its people were "wholly free." The 4 million bondsmen the "martyred emancipator" had liberated were, said the Tribune, a living epistle to Lincoln's immortality. But were all the people now wholly free?

IN THE YEARS after Lincoln's death, emancipated slaves found many compelling reasons to question the meaning of their new freedom in the face of the reign of white terror that descended upon them. At the same time, for quite different reasons, workingmen, the very mechanics who benefited most from the free labor system Lincoln had extolled, began to doubt the nature of their liberty. A few months before the war ended, the nation's most influential trade union leader, William H. Sylvis, came to Chicago and sounded an alarm that echoed in many labor newspapers in the closing months of the war. The president of the powerful Iron Molders' International Union excoriated employers who took advantage of the war emergency to fatten their profits while keeping their employees on lean wages. When union workers protested with strikes, politicians called them traitors, soldiers drove them back to work, and many loyal union men were fired and blacklisted by their bosses in retaliation. How, Sylvis asked, could a republic at war with the principle of slavery make it a felony for a workingman to exercise his right to protest, a right President Lincoln had once celebrated as the emblem of free labor? "What would it profit us, as a nation," the labor leader wondered, if the Union and its Constitution were preserved but essential republican principles were violated? If the "greasy mechanics and horny-handed sons of toil" who elected Abe Lincoln became slaves to work instead of self-educated citizens and producers, what would become of the Republic?

### Focus Question:

- How did labor respond to the growing power of corporations and to what extent were they effective?

**Directions:** Gather information from the below sources and answer the focus question.

- NPR: Haymarket Remembered
- James Green excerpt above
- Assigned Strike
- Assigned Union goals and Constitutions

## **The Haymarket Riot Remembered**

DEBBIE ELLIOTT, host:

In downtown Chicago, at the otherwise ordinary intersection of Des Plaines and Randolph, stands a brick colored statue with men on a hay wagon. The figure towering at the top is gesturing to an invisible crowd. The monument marks the site of the Haymarket Riot, a labor rally 120 years ago that ended in mayhem. Someone in the crowd tossed a bomb into a nearby line of police. The officers opened fire and when it was over, seven policemen and at least three protestors were dead.

The incident sparked the nation's first Red Scare. The events of May 4, 1886 are the subject of a new book, *Death in the Haymarket*, by historian James Green. I asked him what Chicago was like in 1886.

Mr. JAMES GREEN (Author, *Death in the Haymarket*): Well, Chicago was the workshop of the world, the wonder of the Second Industrial Revolution. It was also an immigrant city. A majority of the workers there were born in Europe. And it was a city that had a violent history. There was an uprising of railroad workers in 1877 that was put down very violently. The police force was highly armed, and people were expecting trouble because there was also a revolutionary element in the labor movement there, led by anarchists.

In March and April of 1886, a wave of protest began on behalf of the eight-hour day, and there were many strikes, and on May 3rd, at the McCormick Reaper Works, this is a giant farm implement plant, there was a lockout, and a riot began. The Chicago police came, shot some people. Two or at least three workers were shot. And then the following night, the anarchists called a protest rally against what they called police brutality in the Haymarket Square on Randolph Street.

ELLIOTT: Two of the leading voices of the movement were August Spies, a German immigrant, and Albert Parsons, a former confederate soldier? This sounds like a pretty motley crew.

Mr. GREEN: It's a strange group of people, given where they came from and the fact that they came to Chicago without any idea that they would ever end up being anarchists, especially Parsons, who grew up on a ranch in Texas, and he volunteered as a young man for the Confederate Cavalry. But after the war, he came back to East Texas and was a radical supporter of black rights in Texas, and this was a very violent area at the time. So when he came to Chicago, he had already had a lot of experience in social and political struggles.

ELLIOTT: And Mr. Spies?

Mr. GREEN: Spies was a young man on the make, very highly read. He grew up in the forests of Germany. He had a pretty privileged life. But when he came to America and traveled around, he saw a lot of things that he found very disturbing, particularly the killing of 30 people, workers, during the 1877 railroad strike. That had a big impact on him, and he was a very successful organizer and publisher and speaker in this very, very large German community that was predominantly working class.

ELLIOTT: So let's get now to what happened on the night of May 4, 1886. Spies, Parsons and other speakers are climbing up on this hay wagon. They're addressing the crowd. The Chicago police are watching nearby, and everything appears peaceful. Even the mayor calls it a tame meeting. What goes wrong?

Mr. GREEN: Well, the company of police approach the wagon, and the captain ordered the speaker to disburse, and he argued and said but we are peaceful, and he said never mind, you have to go, and so they, he climbed down from the wagon. The speakers were leaving, and at that point someone, and to this day, we don't know who it was, threw the bomb that caused such havoc, and a police riot broke out.

Naturally, the police were totally unprepared for this, and they all had guns and started shooting, and some of them were probably wounded and killed by, quote, "friendly fire," unquote, and that was the Haymarket Riot, and the anarchists were indicted for this crime, the Crime of the Century.

ELLIOTT: Now, James Green, you write that the hunt for the anarchists responsible for this turned into a frenzy right thereafter. Something like 200 people were arrested?



Mr. GREEN: Right. People were paralyzed with fear, and the police had, you know, really license to act and round up everybody they suspected, all immigrants except for Parsons. And you know, civil liberties went out the window. Homes were raided without search warrants. People were held incommunicado and with complete public support. I mean, people wanted these anarchists, suspected anarchists, rounded up and put on trial.

ELLIOTT: So eventually, eight of them were brought to trial, including Spies and Parsons, but what's interesting is that none of them were charged with actually throwing the bomb.

Mr. GREEN: They were charged with being accessories to murder and charged with being parties of a conspiracy that had been hatched a few nights before with, presumably, with the bomber present. The evidence of this, however, was very flimsy, and their defense lawyers, and later the governor of Illinois, thought they were really being tried for what they had said in their speeches more than for what they had done. It was almost as though, even if they didn't have the bomb, someone had to pay for this crime.

ELLIOTT: Now, the defendants didn't really help themselves on the witness stand. Take Albert Parsons, for example, tell us about his defense.

Mr. GREEN: Well, they were, you could only say militant in their response to these charges, and Parsons even went so far as to continue to justify the use of dynamite in the social struggle. He called it the great equalizer, that powerless people didn't have armies and guns but they had dynamite. So he was not a man who was begging for mercy, and this was, some might say, a fool-hardy act, and yet they were already playing, I think, to their place in history.

ELLIOTT: Some of the defendants were eventually pardoned, but four of them, August Spies, Albert Parsons, George Engel, and Adolph Fischer, went to the gallows. What was the reaction to these hangings?

Mr. GREEN: Well, the immigrants who were very much involved in propelling this militant movement, this visionary movement, were very intimidated. You know, the Haymarket trial was a show trial. The hangings were an indication of what would happen to you if you said the things the anarchists said and if you opposed the state and the police. There was a reaction in the legislature. An eight-hour day was outlawed.

It was a very repressive period, and almost immediately, a sense set in that maybe some mistake had been made, and certainly this happened in the immigrant communities and in the labor movement where people began to say that a great injustice had been done, and the fact that it was immigrants made it seem even more serious to people who were new to the United States and hoping that this was a place where the jury trial system really worked well and there was liberty and justice for all.

ELLIOTT: James Green teaches history at the University of Massachusetts in Boston. His book is called *Death in the Haymarket*. Thank you for talking with us.

Mr. GREEN: Thank you.

ELLIOTT: You can find out more about Haymarket's legacy at our website, [npr.org](http://npr.org).

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In other cities in the country too, labor candidates ran, electing a mayor in Milwaukee, and various local officials in Fort Worth, Texas; Eaton, Ohio; and Leadville, Colorado.

It seemed that the weight of Haymarket had not crushed the labor movement. The year 1886 became known to contemporaries as "the year of the great uprising of labor." From 1881 to 1885, strikes had averaged about 500 each year, involving perhaps 150,000 workers each year. In 1886 there were over 1,400 strikes, involving 500,000 workers. John Commons, in his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, saw in that:

the signs of a great movement by the class of the unskilled, which had finally risen in rebellion.... The movement bore in every way the aspect of a social war. A frenzied hatred of labour for capital was shown in every important strike.... Extreme bitterness toward capital manifested itself in all the actions of the Knights of Labor, and wherever the leaders undertook to hold it within bounds, they were generally discarded by their followers....

Even among southern blacks, where all the military, political, and economic force of the southern states, with the acquiescence of the national government, was concentrated on keeping them docile and working, there were sporadic rebellions. In the cotton fields, blacks were dispersed in their work, but in the sugar fields, work was done in gangs, so there was opportunity for organized action.

By 1886, the Knights of Labor was organizing in the sugar fields. The black workers, unable to feed and clothe their families on their wages, often paid in store scrip, asked a dollar a day. The following year, in the fall, close to ten thousand sugar laborers went on strike, 90 percent of them Negroes and members of the Knights. The militia arrived and gun battles began.

Violence erupted in the town of Thibodaux, Louisiana, where hundreds of strikers, evicted from their plantation shacks, gathered, penniless and ragged, carrying their bed clothing and babies. Their refusal to work threatened the entire sugar crop, and martial law was declared in Thibodaux. Henry and George Cox, two Negro brothers, leaders in the Knights of Labor, were arrested, locked up, then taken from their cells, and never heard from again. On the night of November 22, shooting broke out, each side claiming the other was at fault; by noon the next day, thirty Negroes were dead or dying, and hundreds wounded. Two whites were wounded. A Negro newspaper in New Orleans wrote:

...Lame men and blind women shot; children and hoary-headed grand-sires ruthlessly swept down! The Negroes offered no resistance; they could not, as the killing was unexpected. Those of them not killed took to the woods, a majority of them finding refuge in this city.... Citizens of the United States killed by a mob directed by a State judge.... Laboring men seeking an advance in wages, treated as if they were dogs!...

Native-born poor whites were not doing well either. In the South, they were tenant farmers rather than landowners. In the southern cities, they were tenants, not homeowners. And the slums of the southern cities were among the worst, poor whites living like the blacks, on unpaved dirt streets "choked up with garbage, filth and mud," according to a report of one state board of health.

In the year 1891, miners of the Tennessee Coal Mine Company were asked to sign an "iron-clad contract": pledging no strikes, agreeing to get paid in scrip, and giving up the right to check the weight of the coal they mined (they were paid by the weight). They refused to sign and were evicted from their houses. Convicts were brought in to replace them.

On the night of October 31, 1891, a thousand armed miners took control of the mine area, set five hundred convicts free, and burned down the stockades in which the convicts were kept. The companies surrendered, agreeing not to use convicts, not to require the "iron-clad contract," and to let the miners check on the weight of the coal they mined.

The following year, there were more insurrections in Tennessee. Miners overpowered guards of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company, burned the stockades, shipped the convicts to Nashville. Other unions in Tennessee came to their aid. An observer reported back to the Chattanooga Federation of Trades: "The entire district is as one over the main proposition, 'the convicts must go.' I counted 840 rifles on Monday as the miners passed.... Whites and Negroes are standing shoulder to shoulder."

That same year, in New Orleans, forty-two union locals, with over twenty thousand members, mostly white but including some blacks (there was one black on the strike committee), called a general strike involving half the population of the city. Work in New Orleans came to a stop. After three days—with strikebreakers brought in, martial law, and the threat of militia—the strike ended with a compromise, gaining hours and wages but without recognition of the unions as bargaining agents.

The year 1892 saw strike struggles all over the country: besides the general strike in New Orleans and the coal miners' strike in Tennessee, there

was a railroad switchmen's strike in Buffalo, New York, and a copper miners' strike in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The Coeur d'Alene strike was marked by gun battles between strikers and strikebreakers, and many deaths.

In early 1892, the Carnegie Steel plant at Homestead, Pennsylvania, just outside of Pittsburgh, was being managed by Henry Clay Frick while Carnegie was in Europe. Frick decided to reduce the workers' wages and break their union. He built a fence three miles long and twelve feet high around the steelworks and topped it with barbed wire, adding peepholes for rifles. When the workers did not accept the pay cut, Frick laid off the entire work force. The Pinkerton detective agency was hired to protect strikebreakers.

On the night of July 5, 1892, hundreds of Pinkerton guards boarded barges five miles down the river from Homestead and moved toward the plant, where ten thousand strikers and sympathizers waited. The crowd warned the Pinkertons not to step off the barge. A striker lay down on the gangplank, and when a Pinkerton man tried to shove him aside, he fired, wounding the detective in the thigh. In the gunfire that followed on both sides, seven workers were killed.

The Pinkertons had to retreat onto the barges. They were attacked from all sides, voted to surrender, and then were beaten by the enraged crowd. There were dead on both sides. For the next several days the strikers were in command of the area. Now the state went into action: the governor brought in the militia, armed with the latest rifles and Gatling guns, to protect the import of strikebreakers.

Strike leaders were charged with murder; 160 other strikers were tried for other crimes. All were acquitted by friendly juries. The strike held for four months, but the plant was producing steel with strikebreakers who were brought in, often in locked trains, not knowing their destination, not knowing a strike was on. The strikers, with no resources left, agreed to return to work, their leaders blacklisted.

In the midst of the Homestead strike, a young anarchist from New York named Alexander Berkman, in a plan prepared by anarchist friends in New York, including his lover Emma Goldman, came to Pittsburgh and entered the office of Henry Clay Frick, determined to kill him. Berkman's aim was poor; he wounded Frick and was overwhelmed, then was tried and found guilty of attempted murder.

He served fourteen years in the state penitentiary. His *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* gave a graphic description of the assassination attempt and of his years in prison, when he changed his mind about the usefulness of assas-

Homestead  
Strike

sinations but remained a dedicated revolutionary. Emma Goldman's autobiography, *Living My Life*, conveys the anger, the sense of injustice, the desire for a new kind of life, that grew among the young radicals of that day.

The year 1893 saw the biggest economic crisis in the country's history. After several decades of wild industrial growth, financial manipulation, uncontrolled speculation and profiteering, it all collapsed: 642 banks failed and 16,000 businesses closed down. Out of the labor force of 15 million, 3 million were unemployed. No state government voted relief, but mass demonstrations all over the country forced city governments to set up soup kitchens and give people work on streets or parks.

In New York City, in Union Square, Emma Goldman addressed a huge meeting of the unemployed and urged those whose children needed food to go into the stores and take it. She was arrested for "inciting to riot" and sentenced to two years in prison. In Chicago, it was estimated that 200,000 people were without work, the floors and stairways of City Hall and the police stations packed every night with homeless men trying to sleep.

The depression lasted for years and brought a wave of strikes throughout the country. The largest of these was the nationwide strike of railroad workers in 1894 that began at the Pullman Company in Illinois, just outside of Chicago.

Railroad work was one of the most dangerous jobs in America; over two thousand railroad workers were being killed each year, and thirty thousand injured. The *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine* said: "It comes to this: while railroad managers reduce their force and require men to do double duty, involving loss of rest and sleep...the accidents are chargeable to the greed of the corporation."

It was the Depression of 1893 that propelled Eugene Debs into a lifetime of action for unionism and socialism. He had worked on the railroads for four years until he was nineteen, but left when a friend was killed after falling under a locomotive. He read Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*; it deeply affected him.

In the midst of the economic crisis of 1893, a small group of railroad workers, including Debs, formed the American Railway Union, to unite all railway workers. Debs said: "It has been my life's desire to unify railroad employees and to eliminate the aristocracy of labor...and organize them so all will be on an equality...."

Debs wanted to include everyone, but blacks were kept out: at a convention in 1894, the provision in the constitution barring blacks was affirmed by a vote of 112 to 100. Later, Debs thought this might have had a

note

Two

crucial effect on the outcome of the Pullman strike, for black workers were in no mood to cooperate with the strikers.

In June 1894, workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company went on strike. They received immediate support from other unions in the Chicago area. The Pullman strikers appealed to a convention of the American Railway Union for support:

Mr. President and Brothers of the American Railway Union. We struck at Pullman because we were without hope. We joined the American Railway Union because it gave us a glimmer of hope. Twenty thousand souls, men, women and little ones, have their eyes turned toward this convention today, straining eagerly through dark despondency for a glimmer of the heaven-sent message you alone can give us on this earth....

You all must know that the proximate cause of our strike was the discharge of two members of our grievance committee.... Five reductions in wages.... Pullman, both the man and the town, is an ulcer on the body politic. He owns the houses, the schoolhouses, and churches of God in the town he gave his once humble name....

The American Railway Union responded. It asked its members all over the country not to handle Pullman cars. Since virtually all passenger trains had Pullman cars, this amounted to a boycott of all trains—a nationwide strike. Soon all traffic on the twenty-four railroad lines leading out of Chicago had come to a halt. Workers derailed freight cars, blocked tracks, pulled engineers off trains if they refused to cooperate.

The General Managers Association, representing the railroad owners, agreed to pay two thousand deputies, sent in to break the strike. But the strike went on. The attorney general of the United States, Richard Olney, a former railroad lawyer, now got a court injunction against blocking trains, on the legal ground that the federal mails were being interfered with. When the strikers ignored the injunction, President Cleveland ordered federal troops to Chicago. On July 6, hundreds of cars were burned by strikers.

The following day, the state militia moved in. A crowd of five thousand gathered. Rocks were thrown at the militia, and the command was given to fire. The *Chicago Times* reported:

The command to charge was given.... From that moment only bayonets were used.... A dozen men in the front line of rioters received bayonet wounds.... The police were not inclined to be merciful, and driving the mob against the barbed wires clubbed it unmercifully.... The ground

over which the fight had occurred was like a battlefield. The men shot by the troops and police lay about like logs....

In Chicago that day, thirteen people were killed, fifty-three seriously wounded, seven hundred arrested. Before the strike was over, perhaps thirty-four were dead. With fourteen thousand police, militia, troops in Chicago, the strike was crushed. Debs was arrested for contempt of court, for violating the injunction that said he could not do or say anything to carry on the strike.

Debs, in court, denied he was a socialist. But during his six months in prison, he studied socialism and talked to fellow prisoners who were socialists. Later he wrote: "I was to be baptized in Socialism in the roar of conflict...in the gleam of every bayonet and the flash of every rifle the class struggle was revealed...."

Two years after he came out of prison, Debs wrote in the *Railway Times*: "The issue is Socialism versus Capitalism. I am for Socialism because I am for humanity. We have been cursed with the reign of gold long enough. Money constitutes no proper basis of civilization. The time has come to regenerate society—we are on the eve of a universal change."

Thus, the eighties and nineties saw bursts of labor insurrection, more organized than the spontaneous strikes of 1877. There were now revolutionary movements influencing labor struggles, the ideas of socialism affecting labor leaders. Radical literature was appearing, speaking of fundamental changes, of new possibilities for living.

In this same period, those who worked on the land—farmers, North and South, black and white—were going far beyond the scattered tenant protests of the pre-Civil War years and creating the greatest movement of agrarian rebellion the country had ever seen.

Behind the despair so often registered in the farm country literature of that day, there must have been visions, from time to time, of a different way to live, as in a Hamlin Garland novel, *A Spoil of Office*, where the heroine speaks at a farmers' picnic:

I see a time when the farmer will not need to live in a cabin on a lonely farm. I see the farmers coming together in groups. I see them with time to read, and time to visit with their fellows. I see them enjoying lectures in beautiful halls, erected in every village. I see them gather like the Saxons of old upon the green at evening to sing and dance. I see cities rising near them with schools, and churches, and concert halls and theaters. I see a day when the farmer will no longer be a drudge and his wife a bond

## Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous

Another feature of urban life that became a defining feature of the Gilded Age (so much so that it informed the era's name) was the advent of lavish displays of wealth by the rich. Dubbed "conspicuous consumption" by sociologist Thorstein Veblen in 1899, this trend involved most prominently the construction of opulent mansions in elite urban districts such as New York's Fifth Avenue, Chicago's Lake Shore Drive, and San Francisco's Nob Hill, as well as in exclusive summer retreats like Newport, Rhode Island. Wealthy families like the Vanderbilts and Astors competed to see who could throw the most extravagant ball, weddings, and parties.

One of the most famous was a ball hosted by Alva Vanderbilt, wife of tycoon William K. Vanderbilt, on March 26, 1883, to celebrate the opening of their new \$3 million mansion on upper Fifth Avenue. The elite of New York arrived in costume (17.13). Many dressed as Marie Antoinette, Queen Elizabeth, and Louis XV. This choice of an ostentatious theme of royalty reflected the widely shared belief among the nation's wealthy elite that they constituted an American

aristocracy—a notion that ran counter to the longstanding American tradition of fear and loathing for such undemocratic pretensions (see Chapters 4 and 5). Some labor activists and social critics castigated the ball and high society's rejection of republican simplicity, but Mrs. Vanderbilt's guests paid no heed. They revelled past dawn in a party that cost \$250,000—that in an age when an average worker could expect to earn less than \$700 per

year. By the mid-1880s most newspapers featured "Society" columns that devoted extensive coverage to the lives of the wealthy.

While Americans followed the exploits of the rich with a certain level of wonder, the public would accept only so much extrav-

agance before expressing revulsion. That finally occurred in February 1897, when the Bradley Martin family hosted a \$400,000 party in which eight hundred society guests arrived in costumes depicting European royalty. One society reporter described "a gorgeous, superb, and wonderful spectacle." But in 1897, when the nation was suffering from a severe economic depression, public criticism of the ball poured in from all quarters, including public officials, clergymen, and workers. The Bradley Martins fled to Europe and settled permanently in England, ending the days of diamond-necklace party favors.

**"There is many a palace in Europe that would hide its diminished roof beside the sheer luxury of Fifth Avenue homes."**

EDGAR SALTUS

**"[Y]ou rich people put next to nothing in the collection plate, and yet you'll spend thousands of dollars on Mrs. Bradley Martin's ball."**

Sermon of a minister outraged over the Bradley Martin Ball

Using the S.I.G.H.T.<sup>™</sup> method, critically analyze the accompanying image

S.I.G.H.T.<sup>™</sup> → S scan for important details I identify the conflict or tension

G guess the creator's intent or message H hear the voices T talk or write about your observations

S scan for important details \_\_\_\_\_

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G guess the creator's intent or message \_\_\_\_\_

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T talk or write about your observations \_\_\_\_\_

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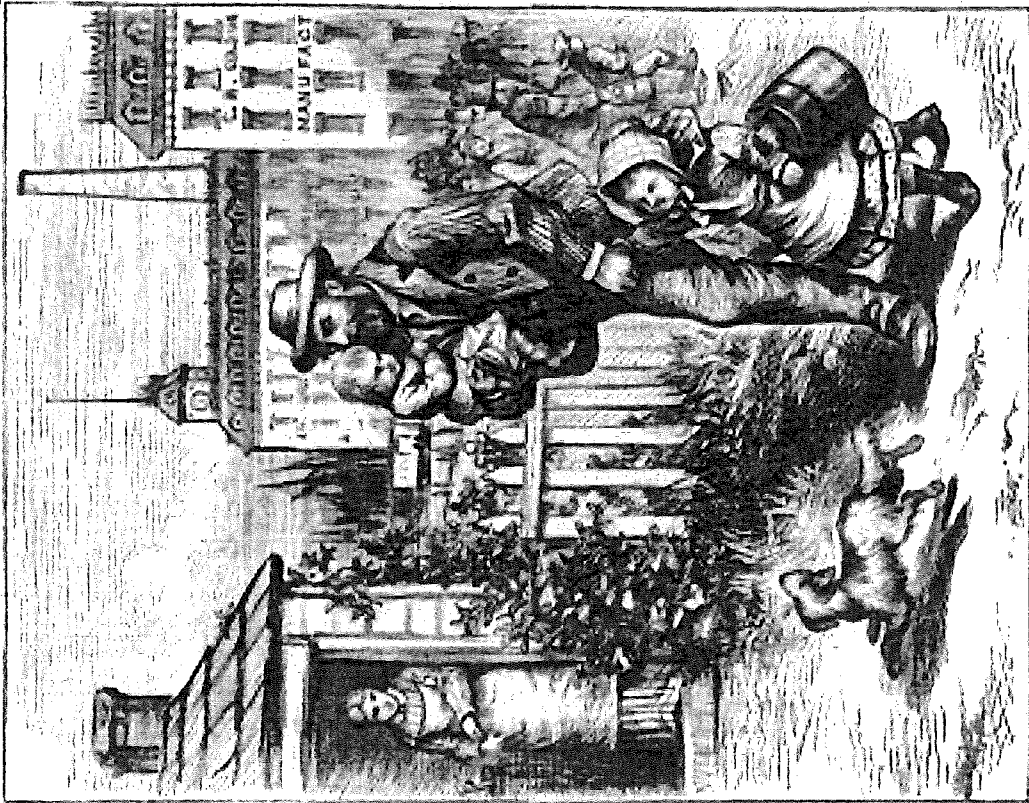
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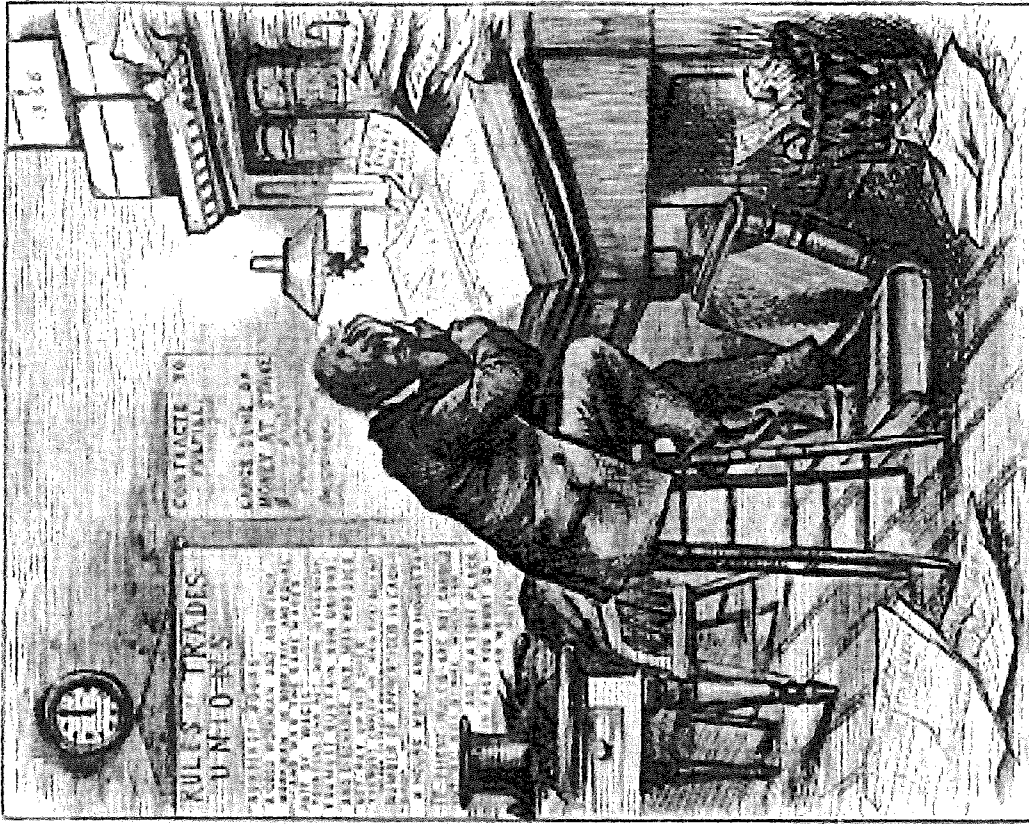
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LABOR.



"PUT YOURSELF IN  
"CONTENT IS USELESS"

CAPITAL.



"HIS PLACE."  
"GOLD IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS"

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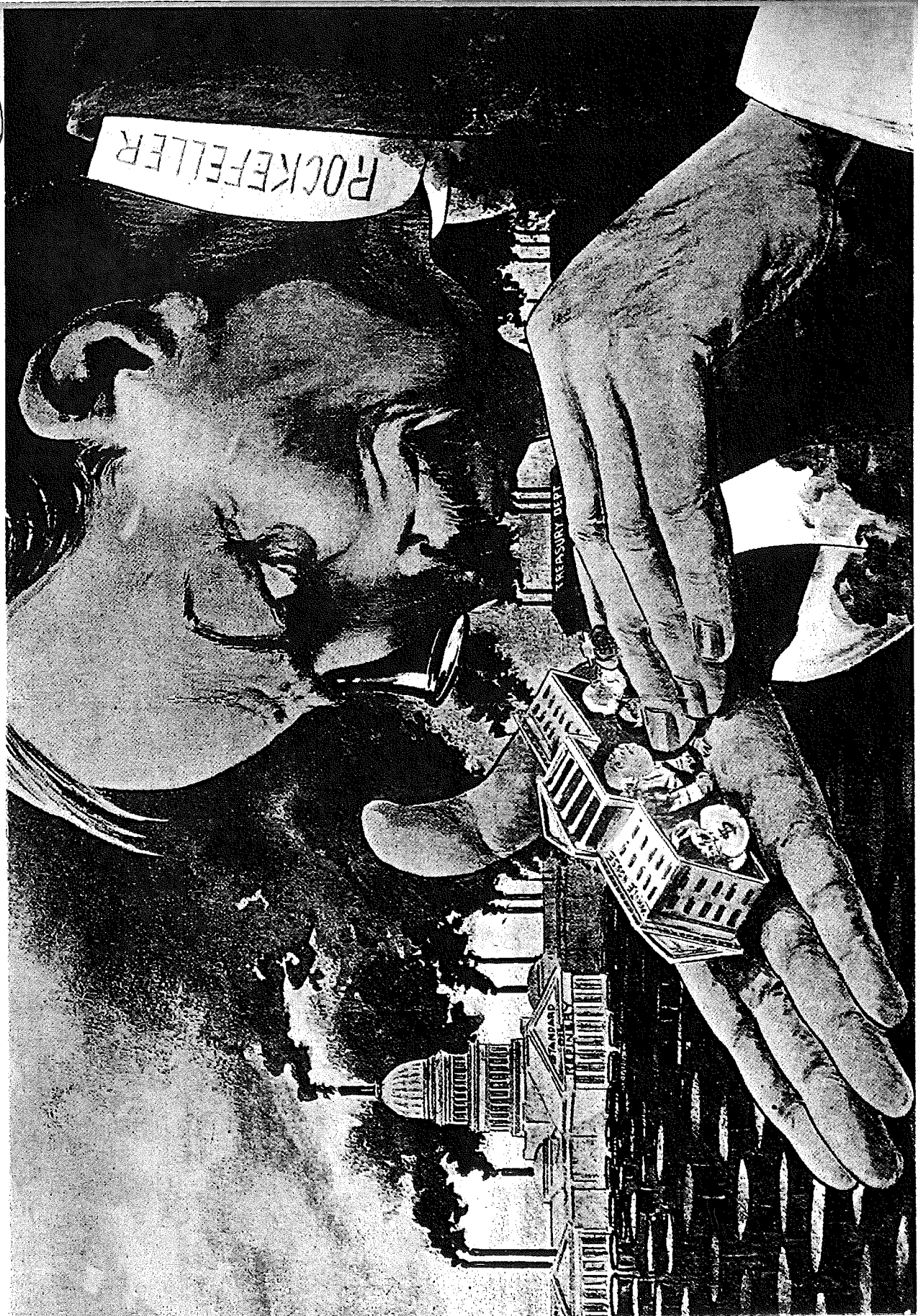




2



(D)



***Gospel of Wealth Reading &  
PBS: The American Experience: The Richest Man in the  
World: Andrew Carnegie***

**Directions:** Throughout the class period, please jot down examples of when Carnegie exhibits the behavior of a Captain of Industry or a Robber Barron.

<b><i>Captain of Industry</i></b>	<b><i>Robber Baron</i></b>

## **Section III: Immigration, Urbanization, & Politics**

### **Focus Questions:**

- **What forces encouraged and discouraged immigration to the United States during this time period?**
- **Why did American nativist groups oppose free, unrestricted immigration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries?**
- **To what extent did/does immigration shape American identity?**
- **What solutions to urban problems were developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century?**
- **What was the relationship between political machines and immigrants?**
- **How did the political machine gain and lose power?**

Source:

Katzman and Tuttle. Plain Folk.  
Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983.

## Introduction

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The significance of the publication of these lifelets was that between the Civil War and World War I the United States was self-consciously a nation of immigrants. From 1880 through 1919, the United States drew twenty-three million immigrants to her shores. Most immigrants entered at Ellis Island, in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. Emma Lazarus expressed the gravitational pull of the United States when in 1883 she wrote "The New Colossus," contrasting the Statue of Liberty with the Colossus of Rhodes; one of the legendary wonders of the ancient world. The Philadelphia poet named the statue "Mother of Exiles," and gave voice to her silent lips:

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. . . .

So they came, drawn by the beacons of economic opportunity, religious freedom, and hope. In the cities and on the prairies they sought their fortune. Railroad company advertisements, state emigration agents, and letters from relatives and friends in the United States promised success and prosperity; the riches to be found in America where "streets were paved with gold" became part of European folklore. Other immigrants came to practice their religion in the United States because it had no single established church and was more-tolerant-of-religious-diversity.

By the late 1880s the pattern of immigration to the United States was significantly different from that of the earlier period. Between 1860 and 1890, ten million immigrants arrived in the United States, predominantly from the British Isles, Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and Holland. In the peak year of 1882, eighty-seven percent of the immigrants came from these countries. But the fifteen million immigrants who entered the United States between 1890 and 1914 came largely from Italy, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Greece, Rumania, and Turkey. Referred to as the "new immigrants," people from these countries comprised eighty-one percent of all immigrants in the peak year of 1907.

European conditions influenced the ebb and flow of immigration to the United States. Industrialization in northern Europe opened up economic opportunities at the end of the nineteenth century and slowed emigration abroad. Heavy migration to the United States earlier in the century had reduced pressures from overpopulation and removed some of the stimuli for leaving northern and western Europe. The famine and poor crops in Ireland in the 1840s and in Sweden in the 1860s had not been repeated. At the same time, conditions in eastern and southern Europe had encouraged millions of families and individuals to leave their homes to find new lives across the ocean. Not only had many eastern and southern Europeans faced limited economic opportunities at home, but also population in those parts of Europe was expanding rapidly, and small farmers, craftsmen, and peasants could neither support their families nor provide opportunities for their children. In some cases, landlords promoted emigration by dispossessing their tenants. In addition, some people fled to the United States for safety, as did Jews from czarist Russia after 1881. Government-provoked pogroms in Russia destroyed countless Jewish communities and killed thousands. Similarly European ethnic minorities—Germans in Russia, Greeks in Rumania, Macedonians in the Balkans, and Czechs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire—found their ethnic identity repressed and, without a national state, sought freedom in the United States. Moreover, the development of transoceanic steamers brought the cost of the Atlantic passage within the means of large masses of eastern and southern Europeans for the first time; they booked passage either with tickets bought themselves or with those purchased and sent back by relatives already in the New World.

The earlier immigrants, those from northern Europe, had received a more hospitable reception in the United States than did the new immigrants. The report of the Dillingham Commission, established by Congress in 1907 to investigate the shift in immigration, reflected the changed American attitude toward immigration and the new immigrants. The commission reported that there was a fundamental difference in the character of American immigration before and after the 1880s. In the earlier period, immigration had been largely a movement of families seeking permanent homes in the New World.

Northern Europeans, the report argued, had assimilated quickly into American society. In contrast, the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were in large part unskilled laborers who had come as transients. Unlike earlier immigrants, they avoided agriculture and congregated in the industrial cities of the East and Midwest, where they clustered in their own communities apart from other Americans.

In dwelling on the "perils" to American society from the new immigration, the Dillingham Commission was wrong but many of its descriptions of the new immigrants were correct. Many of the new immigrants were transients, in part because steamer passage facilitated easy travel back and forth across the Atlantic. On the other hand, those who, like the Jews, had fled religious persecution usually settled permanently in the United States. Most of the new immigrants did settle in cities rather than in agricultural areas, thus stimulating the emergence of ghettos in which ethnic-based foreign-language societies and institutions flourished. Many of the old immigrants, however, had exhibited similar patterns. British and Irish immigrants to the United States, for instance, were no less transient than the new immigrants: between 1881 and 1889, 370,000 Britons and Irish left the United States to return home. Those emigrating from the British Isles also congregated together, forming ethnic enclaves within American society. For example, ethnically based societies and institutions thrived in predominantly Welsh mining towns and English mill villages throughout the United States. These immigrants, too, founded their own churches, groceries, taverns, sports leagues, and newspapers separate and apart from the rest of American society.

What did change radically was the attitude of many native-born Americans toward immigrants in general, and this change found expression in virulent hostility against the new immigrants. The optimism with which Emma Lazarus had penned "The New Colossus" in 1883 had faded by the turn of the century; pessimism over the ability of the United States to absorb large numbers of immigrants had become dominant. The experiences of Americans in a society undergoing transformation from a traditional, mostly agrarian society to a modern, industrial, and urban America, was so searing and uprooting that optimism itself became a major victim.



Earlier in the century, Americans had welcomed immigrants. The potential garden beyond the Mississippi lured people to till the soil and to recover the abundance of natural resources. All who could make the journey would contribute to the nation's productivity; through their labor in the garden, unused land would yield harvests. They would become the independent yeoman farmers of the Jeffersonian tradition and, in the process, help shape the new America, a blending of all the finer characteristics of the Old World shaped by the best of the new one. It was an optimistic vision, at least for whites; blacks, Orientals, and Native Americans were excluded.

In the late nineteenth century this optimism began to erode. Industrialization brought in its wake major depressions in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. Labor conflict and violence dramatically undermined visions of a natural harmony between capital and labor. European political radicalism and utopianism in the forms of socialism, communism, and anarchism brought nascent revolutionary stirrings to American shores. Events highlighted and exacerbated these very real fears: the violence of the Molly Maguires in the Pennsylvania coal fields, the national railroad strike of 1877, the 1886 Haymarket massacre, the 1893 Pullman strike, mining strikes in Colorado, and the assassinations of two presidents—James Garfield and William McKinley—all contrasted sharply with the optimistic vision of the pre-Civil War pastoral republic.

Native-born Americans blamed immigrants for these developments. Some attributed economic depressions to the inability of the new immigrants to adapt to American society. Others complained that the immigrants did not work hard enough or that, by avoiding agriculture, immigrants formed a parasitic group within the economy. Some Americans complained that the new immigrants brought conflicts with them from the Old World to the New; their politics or ethnic nationalism or class identity or religion introduced unnatural conflict in what was a harmonious society. The growing distrust of immigrants culminated during the depression of 1893 to 1897. The American Protective Association, founded as an anti-Catholic organization, blamed nearly all of America's problems on the new immigrants. From the well of Congress in Washington, D.C., to the pulpits of churches in the Midwest, orators expressed their loss of faith in the

ability of the United States to absorb immigrants or in the wisdom of even trying to do so. In addition, many people now saw the wealth of the United States as finite. Immigrants not only did not contribute to the growing national wealth or productivity, but also, the anti-immigrant argument went, by increasing the population they had reduced the slices of the finite pie of resources available to everyone. Economic recovery in 1897 and the decline of the American Protective Association did not end the debate over the contribution of immigrants. The Dillingham Commission clearly doubted the ability of American society to absorb the new immigrants, and its findings were supported by contemporary theories of race in anthropology, so that by the 1920s free entry into the United States would be virtually ended.

While the native-born debated immigration policy, immigrants built and reshaped much of American society and life. They had helped build the American industrial order and, contrary to popular mythology, many of them had settled the agricultural land which fed the burgeoning cities, and they had helped build the railroads and supplied the labor for mines and factories. They had also transformed American politics, introducing the personalized style of clubhouse and patronage politics, and they had altered the political agenda, becoming a voice in state action. They had created new institutions in American society and, by doing so, had introduced the cultural variety and pluralism which have become hallmarks of the United States.

In reshaping American society, immigrants experienced a process in which they themselves were reshaped as well. In immigrating to the United States, they brought with them life-styles and cultural patterns different from the ones they encountered here; the ideals, habits, and rituals of life in their native hamlets and cities differed from the society they encountered after passing through Ellis Island. Once in the United States, immigrants wrestled with the conflict between adapting to American society while trying to maintain their traditional, European customs. Many wished to become "Americanized," to shed the label of "greenhorn" and mirror their image of the native-born, while many others sought to resist Americanizing, to maintain their native languages and life-styles. Settlement in an immigrant ghetto, for instance, could shelter the immigrant from direct and

pervasive contact with American culture. Assimilation in or resistance to American culture, however, were ideal extremes; in reality, most immigrants accepted some aspects of American society while resisting others. But the process created a basic tension which became characteristic of immigrant life.

Cultural tensions were not limited solely to European immigrants. The American-born were moving as well, from farm to city, from one region of the country to another, and from city to city; they, too, encountered new patterns of life and experienced the tensions of the adaptive-resistance process. For example, Southern black men and women, Kentucky hill people, and Vermont farm girls all encountered new cultural patterns in the cities to which they migrated. Even Americans who remained in their rural surroundings had to deal with economic and social change. Industrialization and urbanization so transformed the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that all Americans—immigrants and native-born, movers and stayers alike—had to confront changing life patterns. As producers and consumers, Americans became interdependent on each other and on regional or national markets. Subsistence farming, for example, gave way to the staple agricultural system where farmers grew crops for market and entered the money economy. Railroads brought their farm produce to market and returned with manufactured and consumer goods for farmers to purchase. Simultaneously, the craftsmen's workshops and the apprentice-journeyman-master system gave way to structured factories and assigned work tasks. Consumer items were no longer made to order locally; they carried a fixed price and were manufactured rather than crafted.

Workers in the United States, whether native or foreign-born, had been accustomed to traditional work rhythms. People in rural society, for example, had followed such rhythms of nature as the sun and rainfall. Before artificial lights, craftsmen spent more time at their benches during the longer daylight hours of summer than in the shorter daytime of winter. Agriculture obviously had seasonal cycles as well: intensive seasonal planting, weeding, and harvesting, sometimes around the clock, followed by harvest holidays and a slower work pace until the cycle was repeated the following year. The pattern differed, however, from village to village, as different nationality and

religious groups pursued their own customs and rhythms.

Industrial society changed the structure of work in the United States. Unlike the craftsmen who had made the whole product, such as a shoe or coat or chair, factory workers gathered in large numbers under one roof, performed according to preset rules, and became minutely specialized in making one item or accomplishing one task. In the factory a worker cut soles or sewed buttons or lathed chair legs or merely assembled the final product. Rather than using their judgment or experience gained from years as apprentices or journeymen, or fitting the needs of a customer with whom they had dealt personally, they now performed impersonal tasks assigned by managers or engineers. Under the factory system control of the work lay with the foreman, not with the workers themselves.

Industrial society imposed new work habits on all workers. The discipline of the clock replaced seasonal and cultural rhythms, and employees worked a fixed number of hours in summer and winter. Factory workers were cogs in a complex machine which required harmony, unity, and subservience to function. Factory managers were thus intolerant of work patterns that encouraged workers, in performing tasks, to follow traditional cultural and ethnic rhythms rather than the preassigned discipline. Bosses, for example, would not tolerate workers who insisted on celebrating their own national holidays rather than reporting to work. Managers insisted that workers had to be trained to adapt to the factory; they needed new discipline, new habits, new attitudes. Bosses clothed the process in the most patriotic of terms: it was Americanization. Those who failed to adapt not only threatened the new American industrial order, the job of building modern America, but denied themselves the fruits of American capitalism.

For workers the process of change was complex and demanding, although the new discipline offered not only economic benefits but also, in some cases, physical survival. But there was value in tradition as well. Indeed, many people perceived their very identity and sense of self to be indivisible from ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions. The demands of the factory conflicted with familial and kinship ties, religious imperatives, and social customs and patterns. Many refused to accept the inevitability of the changes wrought by



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### *Plain Folk*

factory civilization. The most significant labor organization of the mid-1880s, the Knights of Labor, represented in part a rejection of the new industrial order. The Knights pictured an ideal society of small shopkeepers and independent craftsmen living and working within a Christian cooperative commonwealth. Similarly many workers sought to escape the new discipline by becoming their own bosses. Seeking to rise in the social order rather than trying to improve their conditions as workers, they identified with foremen and aspired to join the latter's ranks. Or they started their own businesses, substituting intensive labor for a lack of capital. Although few were successful, the slim prospects of success did not extinguish the flame of hope.

Many of the factory workers engaged in a struggle with managers over control of their work tasks and conditions. On a daily basis they resisted the new discipline and habits, continuing to perform tasks according to traditional patterns and absenting themselves from work on ethnic and religious holidays. Some formed labor unions in a collective attempt to exert control over their working lives. Later workers turned to government and, through hours, wage, and safety legislation, sought to check management's powers. These tensions in the workplace between the pulls of tradition and custom on the one hand, and the demands of the modern, industrial society on the other were experienced nearly everywhere in America in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Yet in the face of tension and insecurity, the lives of these undistinguished Americans had value and substance. If at times they lost faith in others, they seemed to maintain faith in themselves. They struggled with themselves and the larger society, with their tensions and insecurities, to make something of their own lives. Their voices, in the written word, are of people proud and self-aware. Their ability to articulate their own lives sets them apart from others of their generation; yet one can easily imagine hearing similar tales from their coworkers and neighbors if we could go back in time and interview them. Unable to do so we should then listen with greater attention to their stories.

*Lawrence, Kansas*

*January 1, 1981*

*(Record answers on separate sheet)*

#### Discussion Questions:

1. What forces encouraged and discouraged immigration in the U.S.?
2. Immigration patterns have been divided into two different categories: Old (1860-1890) and New (1890-1914). Describe the differences that existed between the two.
3. When and why did attitudes of native-born Americans change toward immigrants?
4. Describe the ways immigrants have built and reshaped much of American society and life?
5. What does it mean to be "Americanized"?
6. How did industrialization and urbanization transform U.S. society?

\* Read and annotate.  
- Pay particular  
attention to focus  
question below.

# Immigration in the Gilded Age: Change or Continuity?

The United States Immigration Commission, at the beginning of its well-known 1911 report, stigmatized the so-called "new immigrants"—persons who came from southern and eastern Europe, largely Italians, Jews, and Poles—as follows:

The old immigration movement was essentially one of permanence. The new immigration is very largely one of individuals, a considerable proportion of whom apparently have no intention of permanently changing their residence, their only purpose in coming to America being to temporarily take advantage of the greater wages paid for industrial labor in this country (1).

The distinction had long been made by nativists and others. As early as 1888 Lord Bryce in *The American Commonwealth* could sneer that "new immigrants, politically incompetent" were easily corruptible (2). To be sure, the nature of American immigration changed during the Gilded Age—as it has changed during our entire history and as it is changing today. Was Gilded-Age immigration strikingly different from that which preceded it, or was it another variation in a continuously changing pattern? To answer that question, it is necessary to look at the numbers of persons involved and their origins, and to examine the sociocultural matrix in which immigrants moved.

During the Gilded Age—defined here as the period from 1871 to 1901—11.7 million persons are recorded as immigrating to the United States (3). That is considerably more than the number that immigrated to the British North American colonies and the United States in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and the first seven decades of

the nineteenth century combined, but fewer than the 12.9 million who came in the first fourteen years of the new century. The national and ethnic composition of the immigrant population did change in the Gilded Age, as it has changed throughout our history. Britons dominated seventeenth-century migration; during the eighteenth century large numbers of Africans (4) and Germans came; in the period between the 1820s and the Civil War, Germans and Catholic Irish predominated, along with a smaller but still substantial number of Scandinavians. All of the groups named above, except for Africans, continued to come in the Gilded-Age decades and were joined by immigrants from eastern and southern Europe whose previous presence had been statistically insignificant. Table 1 shows European immigration by nation/region for the three Gilded-Age decades (5).

Those 10.6 million European immigrants represented 90 percent of all immigrants. Canadians, mostly from Quebec, made up 6.7 percent, and Chinese accounted for 1.7 percent of the total. Only in the 1890s did "new" European immigrants outnumber the "old," but even then they were just barely a majority. What is rarely noticed is that the incidence of immigrants—the percentage of foreign-born in the population—was remarkably constant throughout the Gilded Age and the decades that frame it. The percentage of foreigners in the country did not vary significantly in any of the censuses between 1860 and 1920, a period justly characterized as one of rapid change in almost every other aspect of American life. Both the first and last of those censuses recorded the foreign-born as 13.2 percent of the population, while the censuses in between report percentages of 14.0, 13.3, 14.7, 13.6, and 14.7, respectively. Yet contemporaries perceived that the amount of immigration was overwhelming. These

Table 1  
European Immigration:  
Major Sources, 1871-1900

Nation/region	1870s	1880s	1890s	Total
Germany	718,182	1,452,970	505,152	2,676,304
Ireland	436,871	655,482	388,416	1,480,769
Britain	548,043	807,357	271,538	1,626,938
Scandinavia	243,016	656,494	371,512	1,271,022
Western Europe	1,946,112	3,572,303	1,536,618	7,055,033
Austria-Hungary	72,969	353,719	592,707	1,019,395
Italy	55,759	307,309	651,893	1,014,961
Russia	39,284	213,282	505,290	757,856
Poland	12,970	51,806	96,720	161,496
Southern/eastern Europe	180,982	926,116	1,846,610	2,953,708
Europe, 8 countries				10,008,741
Europe, all countries				10,562,761
All countries				11,746,190

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 1:106-07.

perceptions have been repeated by historians who have persisted in using what I call hydraulic metaphors to describe the immigration process. Immigrants are described as coming to the United States in "waves," "floods," "torrents," and "streams." One does not have to be a specialist in semiotics to understand that the habitual use of such language tends to stigmatize immigrants as the "other," rather than as the ancestors of us all (6).

But numbers, important as they are, can tell only a fragment of the immigrant story. In my American immigration history course, in which one emphasis is group comparison, I suggest that students use what I call the "immigrant paradigm" as a way to organize information. The paradigm consists of a set of questions for discussion. These questions, with some possible answers, are reproduced below.

### 1. Where did immigrants come from?

Gilded-Age immigrants came overwhelmingly from Europe, with a steady shift toward eastern and southern Europe. Germans, British, Irish, Scandinavians, Italians, and subjects of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires predominated.

### 2. Why did they leave?

As with most migrants in American history, perceived economic/social advantage was the major propulsive force, although persecution at home (including compulsory military service) was an important factor for many, especially those who were a minority group where they lived. Students of immigration often use a "push-pull"

dichotomy to describe the factors impelling persons to emigrate. The first term applies to conditions at home while the second is shorthand for the attractive factors about the destination. Push may be general (economic dislocation, war, persecution) or personal (familial division of land or other family crises, trouble with the authorities, or other dissatisfaction with life). Pull connotes the attractions of the destination. While push factors were part of immigrants' experiences, pull factors were part of their hopes, hopes that were not always realistic (7). To be sure, the factors were not mutually exclusive. Many if not most immigrants were propelled by both factors, and it is not possible to make a neat calculation of comparative forces.

### 3. How did they get here?

The development of transportation networks greatly influenced Gilded-Age immigration. As railroads—and cheaper and cheaper fares—spread through Europe, places with secure transportation to seaports multiplied. Oceanic transport changed dramatically in the years just before the Gilded Age. As late as 1856 more than 95 percent of European immigrants came to America by sail. Less than twenty years later (1873) more than 95 percent came on steamships. The chief transport innovation in the Gilded Age was the development of networks of part-time ticket agents in the United States employed by the European lines that dominated the trade. A Polish immigrant living in Detroit who wanted to bring over a relative or friend could go to a store or a saloon in the ethnic community and purchase a combination ticket from a Hamburg-Amerika Line agent that would be delivered to the relative/friend in Krakow. Such a ticket would provide rail transportation to Hamburg, accommodations in Hamburg while waiting for a ship, trans-Atlantic passage, and rail travel from New York to Detroit. While the technology was new, the end result was similar to what had been going on at least since the Great Migration of Puritans to New England in the seventeenth century.

### 4. Where did they settle?

While settlement patterns of Gilded-Age immigrant groups varied, an increasing percentage settled in urban centers. Ever since the census began listing the foreign-born separately in 1850, they have been more likely to live in cities—and especially in large cities—than the population at large. Regionally, immigrants favored the

northeastern and north central states—and by 1890, the western states—while shunning the South (8). Ethnic groups had their own patterns: Irish and Canadians favored New England, Italians and Russians the middle Atlantic states, Germans the east north central states, and Scandinavians the west north central states (9).

### 5. *What did they do?*

Because the Gilded Age was an era of expanding industrialism, most immigrants worked at industrial jobs, usually at the unskilled level, although workers with mechanical skills and training could start higher up the employment ladder. Most immigrants had to take the hardest, lowest paying, and most hazardous industrial employment. These unsung workers were, in historian Carl Wittke's phrase, "we who built America," and those who extol the achievements of industrial moguls like Andrew Carnegie ought to spend at least a little time considering the role of workers, immigrant and native-born, who created the wealth that entrepreneurs amassed. It was not just immigrant men who worked. Immigrant women and children were much more likely to be in the labor force than those who were native-born.

The agricultural sector, which had once included a majority of immigrants, still attracted a minority, most often those who came with significant resources. Even with free arable western land, which was rapidly disappearing, the costs of establishing a farm were far beyond the means of all but a few Gilded-Age immigrants. Even immigrants from groups that had been predominantly agricultural in the decades around mid-century, such as the Swedes, found mostly industrial employment toward the close of the century.

### 6. *How did they live?*

Most Gilded-Age immigrants, like their predecessors, lived in ethnic enclaves in both town and country whenever they could. There they could speak their own languages, worship with familiar rituals, and generally recreate a version of the world they had left. The Chinese were confined in parts of cities that came to be called Chinatowns as early as 1857 (10). In the Gilded Age, as the Chinese moved East, Chinatowns sprang up in places such as Butte, Montana, as well as in New York, Boston, and other cities. But, even without the rigidity of Chinese segregation, enclaves for Europeans developed with names like Kleindeutschland and Little Italy.

### 7. *In what ways did their culture change or stay the same?*

Attempts to create familiar surroundings and to maintain old cultures were largely doomed to failure. As the poet Stephen Vincent Benet remarked of seventeenth-century English immigrants:

They planted England with a stubborn trust.  
But the cleft dust was never English dust (11).

Language rarely persisted more than a generation or a generation and a half. Some food preferences continued for as long or longer, but most immigrant culture succumbed to the omnipotent American environment and the desire of children to "be American."

The great exception was religion, although that, too, underwent changes. The Roman Catholic Church became very much a workers' church in nineteenth-century America, what Jay Dolan calls an "immigrant fortress." While most Jewish synagogues still held their main services on Saturdays, Sunday and Sabbath schools developed among Reform and Conservative Jews. Similarly, Japanese Buddhists adapted Protestant hymns into songs like "Buddha Loves Me, This I Know." One of the great clashes of cultures concerned the use of Sunday leisure in which the "continental Sunday" of play collided with the "English Sunday" of prayer, often enforced by blue laws. Similar struggles concerned the use of Protestant bibles in public schools. To be sure, many Protestant immigrants supported the "English Sunday" and bible reading, but the struggle was generally seen as one of "foreigners" versus "Americans."

Each of the foregoing "answers" describe processes that were at work long before the Gilded Age began and that have continued, with somewhat different protagonists, to the present. Thus, continuity rather than change seems to predominate. But an examination of immigration policy shows an entirely different pattern. While some Americans wanted to regulate and lessen immigration even in the grossly underpopulated colonial era—so much so that a serious nativist or anti-immigrant political movement had developed before the Civil War—only in the Gilded Age did the American government begin to restrict free immigration (12).

Restriction began with an ineffective 1875 statute aimed at Chinese women (13). The first effective statute was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which did not bar all Chinese immigrants but only Chinese laborers (14). At the time there were only about 125,000 Chinese of all kinds in the United States, the majority of them in California.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was the hinge on which immigration policy turned. Within a few years America's once free and unrestricted immigration policy had been modified in a number of ways. Immigrants had to pay a small fee to enter, contract labor was forbidden, and the barred category was widened to include persons with certain physical and mental disabilities, those with criminal records, and polygamists. (The latter target comprised Mormons, not Muslims.) None of these provisions kept many persons other than Chinese out. The general purpose of government policy was still to bring more people in, not keep them out. This was symbolized by the creation of the immigration station on Ellis Island, which opened in 1892. In the previous year Congress had created the first immigration bureaucracy headed by a superintendent of immigration who supervised twenty-seven subordinates. By 1906 his successor had a staff of 1,600 (15).

This bureaucracy, often headed by former trade-union officials such as Terrence V. Powderly, was imbued from the beginning with a strong animus against immigrants. Apart from the barring of most Chinese, nativists did not win other major victories in the Gilded Age. Their most effective organization, the elite Immigration Restriction League, founded by Harvard graduates in 1894, managed

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**"They told us that in America the streets were paved with gold. When we got here we saw that they weren't paved at all. Then they told us that we had to pave them!"**

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get its pet bill, a literacy test for immigrants, through Congress in 1897. But President Grover Cleveland vetoed the bill. A congressional blockage apparently stage-managed by William McKinley's administration killed similar legislation. The literacy test was vetoed by William Howard Taft in 1913, by Woodrow Wilson in 1915, and enacted over a second Wilson veto in 1917 (16).

What conclusions are to be drawn from this brief summary? It seems to me that both continuity and change have prevailed and that it is time to discard the "old-new" dichotomy which suggests otherwise. Its continued use today can only cause confusion. If Italians, Eastern European Jews, Poles, and others who first came to America in significant numbers in the late nineteenth century are "new immigrants," what are we to call the Asians and Latin Americans who dominate contemporary immigration? Should we emulate our colleagues in the Modern Language Association and call them "post-new immigrants"? I hope not. I would argue that, from our earliest history, most free immigrants have been persons who wanted to come to America to better themselves, and that a minority of them have been persons who were fleeing some kind of persecution. As transportation and political conditions changed, so did the sources of immigration. What has changed has not been the immigrant but the nature of both America and the rest of the world.

A more appropriate system of nomenclature would place immigrants in the appropriate era and speak of immigrants as those of the colonial era, of the agricultural era, of the industrial era, and those who have come in what some call "post-industrial America." Another schema, for the era of restriction that began in 1882, would be to speak of an era of increasing restriction, 1882-1924; an era of severe restriction, 1924-1952; an era of relaxing restriction, 1952-

1980; and the present era, as yet nameless, which David Reimers describes as a "turn against immigration" (17). □

#### Endnotes

1. United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), 1:24.
2. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1889), 2:473.
3. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 1:106. This volume is the source for all subsequent statistics not otherwise ascribed. Except for the Chinese after 1882, illegal immigration was statistically insignificant in the Gilded Age, but many immigrants crossing the land borders were simply not recorded. The Canadian border was more significant.
4. Some object to considering Africans, who were almost all enslaved persons, being counted as immigrants, but no one objects to using the term for the large number of Europeans who came as semi-free indentured servants.
5. For this period the immigration statistics are based on a fiscal year ending 30 June, so the table really covers 1 July 1870 to 30 June 1901. For Gilded-Age data this makes little difference, but in 1914, for example (really 1 July 1913 to 30 June 1914), it masks the effects of World War I on immigration.
6. The stigmatization of strangers is all but universal. For example, the Organizer-General of Jamaica's Afro-West Indian League insisted that Asian Indians, even those born on the island, should not be called Jamaicans "in the same way that a chicken hatched in an oven cannot be called a bread." *Jamaica Times*, 3 February 1950, as cited in Howard Johnson, ed., *After the Crossing: Immigrants and Minorities in Caribbean Creole Society* (Totowa, NJ: F. Cass, 1988).
7. An Italian-American folk saying goes something like this: "They told us that in America the streets were paved with gold. When we got here we saw that they weren't paved at all. Then they told us that we had to pave them!"
8. The regional index of immigrants (that is, percentage of foreign-born population/percentage of population) was as follows:

	1870	1890
Northeastern	1.5	1.5
North Central	1.3	1.3
Southern	0.2	0.2
Western	0.7	1.5

Source: David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), Table 2-3, 60.

9. *Ibid.*, Tables 2-5 and 2-6, 67, 72.
10. The first use recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes from the *Butte Record* of Oroville in California's "mother lode" country for 31 January 1857, which told its readers in a story about a New Year's celebration that "Chinatown was wild with joy."

## Major U.S. Immigration Laws

**U.S. Constitution (1789)** gave Congress the power to “establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization.”

**Immigration Act of 1819** set standards for vessels bringing immigrants. Ship captains had to provide customs officials with a list of immigrants describing where they came from, where they were going, and their age, sex, and occupation. Passengers ill with contagious diseases had to be quarantined. States carried out the provisions of this law.

**Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)** granted U.S. citizenship to Mexicans living in the territory ceded by Mexico to the United States.

**14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1868)** guaranteed that “All persons born or naturalized in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States . . . .”

**Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)** banned for 10 years Chinese immigration and eligibility for citizenship. The law was renewed in 1892 and 1892 and made permanent in 1902. It was not repealed until World War II.

**Contract Labor Law of 1885** outlawed the practice of signing up foreign laborers to work in America for low wages. No immigrant could have a job or a promise of a job before landing.

**Immigration Act of 1891** gave the job of processing immigrants to the federal government. Federal inspectors examined immigrants on arrival. The law also barred persons suffering from “loathesome or dangerous diseases,” those convicted of crimes involving “moral turpitude,” polygamists, and those whose passage was paid for by others. Those rejected for immigration were deported at the expense of the shipping companies.

**Immigration Act of 1907** allowed the president to make an agreement with Japan to limit the number of Japanese immigrants. The law also barred the feeble-minded, those with physical or mental defects, those suffering from tuberculosis, children under 16 without parents, and women entering for “immoral purposes.”

**Immigration Act of 1917** banned all “aliens over sixteen years of age, physically capable of reading, who cannot read the English language, or some other language or dialect.”

**National Origins (First Quota) Act of 1921** limited the number of immigrants from any country to 3 percent of the foreign-born persons of that nationality living in the United States in 1910. This formula provided for relatively large immigrant quotas for Northern Europe and small quotas for Southern and Eastern Europe.

**National Origins (Second Quota) Act of 1924** further discriminated against Southern and Eastern Europeans by limiting the number of immigrants from any country to 2 percent of foreign born persons of that nationality living in the U.S. in 1890. Only 164,000 immigrants were to be admitted each year; this total was further reduced to 150,000 in 1929. The law also imposed new restrictions on Asian immigration.

**Displaced Persons Act of 1948** allowed into the United States refugees from countries ravaged by World War II, but their entry was charged to the national quota limits established in 1924.

**McCarren-Walter Act of 1952** maintained the quota system and limited immigration to 150,000 persons a year. In addition, refugees fleeing communist countries were admitted under special parole authority of the U.S. attorney general.

**Immigration Act of 1965** abolished the national origins quota system. Preference is given to skilled persons and immigrants who are closely related to American citizens. After five years residency in the United States, immigrants may apply for naturalized citizenship.

**Refugee Act of 1980** defined a “refugee” as any person leaving his or her own country because of a “well founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group, or political opinion.”

**Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986** made it illegal for employers to knowingly hire illegal immigrants. It also set up a process to grant amnesty and legal papers to about 1.5 million undocumented people in the United States.

**Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996** authorized more Border Patrol agents and a triple fence along the San Diego border, made tougher penalties for smuggling people and creating fraudulent documents, and created an “expedited removal” process to remove anyone trying to enter the United States without proper documents.

**USA Patriot Act of 2001** put immigration under the control of the newly created Department of Homeland Security and tripled the budget for Border Patrol agents along the Canadian border.

**To what extent does immigration shape American identity?**

Using the outline of "Major U.S Immigration Laws", answer the following questions. Be prepared to share your thoughts with your classmates when you come to class. P.S: keep the above question in mind...

1. What are the common links/similarities between the immigration laws? Explain.
2. Who were targeted groups & why? (*groups* as in were there immigrants from specific regions of the globe that were targeted)
3. Review the dates of when these acts were passed? Any significance to any of them? You may want to flip through your textbook while noting such...
4. What was/were the harshest law(s) against immigration?
5. In your opinion, which law is the most important? Why?
6. In your opinion, which law is the most influential on the general public of the United States? Why?
7. From the perspective of an immigrant, which laws were most lenient?

## *Immigration and the American Identity*

## Getting Started:

1. What do you think is necessary to become a citizen?
2. Within the naturalization process, what responsibilities should the immigrant have?
3. Should the government carry any responsibilities for the care of immigrants?



**This section should be completed after you have viewed the naturalization test.**

1. What kinds of questions are being asked?
2. Do you think there are any questions that are missing?
3. Do you think these questions are reflective of the American Identity?

### What Would You Do To Improve Conditions?

The year is 1880. New York City's swelling population has created a housing crisis. Immigrant families crowd into apartments that lack light, ventilation, and sanitary facilities. Children have nowhere to play except in the streets and are often kept out of school to work and help support their families.

**Task:**

Your group is New York's City Council and it is your job to improve these conditions. You will need to:

- 1) evaluate the problems facing NYC
- 2) Decide how you can fix these problems
- 3) Since you only have a limited budget and can't fix all problems at once, you need to decide which problems you will fix first. Therefore, once you determine your solutions, you will work with your group to rank each problem & solution in the order of importance. There are 6 problems facing you – you will need to rank them in 1-6.
- 4) For the problem/solutions you determine to be of the most importance (1) and of least importance (6) you will need to explain your reasoning behind your decision.
- 5) Once you decide your solutions, I'll let you know what really happened!

#### **HOUSING**

**Problem:**

When the industrial age began, working class families in cities had two housing options. They could either buy a house on the outskirts of town, where they would face transportation problems, or rent cramped rooms in a boardinghouse in the central city. As the urban population increased, however, new types of housing were designed. For example, row houses – single family dwellings that shared side walls with other similar houses – packed many single-family residences onto a single block. After working class families left the central city, immigrants often took over their old housing, sometimes with two or three families occupying a one family residence. These multi-family urban dwellings, called *tenements*, were overcrowded and unsanitary.

**Your Solution & Rank:**

## How Cities Responded:

TRANSPORTATION
<b>Problem:</b> In 1800s, the streets of most American cities were not paved. Roads were dusty in summer and muddy in winter. Improvements were slow, and there was controversy over paving materials. Asphalt was smooth, long lasting, and easy to clean, but expensive. Workers could not easily get to work or to outlying communities.
<b>Your Solution &amp; Rank:</b>
<b>How Cities Responded:</b>

WATER
<b>Problem:</b> Cities also faced the problems of supplying safe drinking water. As the urban population grew in the 1840s and 1850s, cities such as New York and Cleveland built public waterworks to handle the increasing demand. As late as the 1860s, however, the residents of many cities had grossly inadequate piped water – plumbing, and residents had to collect water in pails from faucets on the street and heat it for bathing. The necessity of improving water

quality to control diseases such as cholera and typhoid fever was obvious.

**Your Solution & Rank:**

**How Cities Responded:**

#### **SANITATION**

**Problem:**

As the cities grew, so did the challenge of keeping them clean. Horse manure piled up on the streets, sewage flowed through open gutters, and factories spewed foul smoke into the air. Without dependable trash collection, people dumped their garbage on the streets. Although private contractors called scavengers were hired to sweep the streets, collect garbage, and clean outhouses, they often did not do the jobs properly.

**Your Solution & Rank:**

**How Cities Responded:**

CRIME
<b>Problem:</b> As the population of cities increased, pickpockets and thieves flourished.
<b>Your Solution &amp; Rank:</b>
<b>How Cities Responded:</b>

FIRE
<b>Problem:</b> The limited water supply in many cities contributed to another menace: the spread of fires. Major fires occurred in almost every large American city during the 1870s, and the 1880s. In addition to lacking water with which to combat blazes, most cities were packed with wooded dwellings, which were like kindling waiting to be ignited. The use of candles and kerosene heaters also posed a fire hazard. In San Francisco, deadly fires broke out during earthquakes.
<b>Your Solution &amp; Rank:</b>
<b>How Cities Responded:</b>

What problem was the most important to fix & why?

What problem was least important to fix & why?

***Exploring the Tenements of the Lower East Side***  
***97 Orchard Street, New York, NY***  
***WebQuest***

**Directions:**

- ☐ Turn computer on
- ☐ Open up Safari or Firefox
- ☐ Go to: [www.tenement.org](http://www.tenement.org)
- ☐ When the page opens, scroll down to **"Virtual Tour"**
- ☐ Read the introduction
- ☐ Click on **"Enter Here"** (there should be a big arrow)
- ☐ You are now entering 97 Orchard Street

The next page is the hallway in ruins of 97 Orchard Street: you may explore the house.

Answer the following questions:

1. What amenities did 97 Orchard Street lack?
2. What prompted the landlords to fix the tenement up?

Click on **"Early Tenements"** and read the description.

3. In 1864 what percent of New York City residents lived in tenement houses?

In the upper left hand of the window, there is a selection bar that says, "Select an Apartment." You will have the opportunity to explore five different apartments at 97 Orchard Street and read about the families that lived there. When you select a family a brief biography will come up and you will have the option to read more about the family. Please choose to read more. Explore each apartment and answer the following questions regarding each family.

**The Confino Family:**

1. From where did the Confino family emigrate?
2. What cultural differences did they face in the Lower East Side?

**The Rogarshevsky Family:**

1. From where did the Rogarshevsky family emigrate?
2. How many family members were living in their apartment?
3. How did the family find comfort in the United States?

**The Levine Family**

1. From where did the Levine family emigrate?
2. What purpose did the Levine's apartment serve (other than living quarters)?
3. Why were Harris Levin's employees encouraged to produce as many articles of clothing as possible?
4. How much money did the Levine family have to spend per week?

**The Baldizzi Family:**

1. From where did the Baldizzi family emigrate?
2. What was Josephine's father's profession in Italy? What did he do in America?
3. Why was the Baldizzi family forced to move in 1930?

**The Gumpertz Family:**

1. From where did the Gumpertz family emigrate?
2. How did Nathalie support her family after Julius's death?

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**How were these families' experiences similar and different from each other? Note at least 2 for each.**

Similarities:

1.

2.

Differences:

1.

2.

## UNIT EIGHT READINGS

# The Arrival Of Reform

Taken From:  
Sources in American  
History: A Book of  
Readings (1986)

### READING FOCUS

1. What was the basic philosophy on which Tammany Hall operated?
2. Why was Plunkitt so successful?

## 167 How Tammany Hall Operated

By the end of the 1800's corrupt political machines controlled the governments of many large cities. Tammany Hall in New York City was one of the most powerful of these political machines. It stayed in power through graft, bought the votes of immigrants through favors, and set up a "balanced ticket" so that a member of each major ethnic group held a top position in city government. An important politician in Tammany Hall for many years was George Washington Plunkitt.

In 1905 a young newspaper reporter, William L. Riordan, wrote a book about Plunkitt. The book included an account, in Plunkitt's own words, on how he became a politician and a millionaire.

*A cartoonist's impression of Tammany Hall*



Everybody is talking these days about Tammany people growing rich on graft, but nobody thinks of drawing the distinction between honest graft and dishonest graft. There's all the difference in the world between the two. Yes, many of our people have grown rich in politics. I have myself. I've made a big fortune out of the game, and I'm getting richer every day. But I've not gone in for dishonest graft—black-mailing gamblers, saloon-keepers, and so on. And neither have any of the people who have made big fortunes in politics.

There's an honest graft, and I'm an example of how it works. I might sum up the whole thing by saying: "I seen my opportunities and I took 'em."

Just let me explain by examples. My party's in power in the city, and it's going to undertake a lot of public improvements. Well, I'm told ahead of time, say, that they're going to lay out a new park at a certain place.

I see my opportunity and I take it. I go to that place and buy up all the land I can in the neighborhood. Then the board of this or that makes its plan public, and there is a rush to get my land, which nobody wanted before.

Ain't it perfectly honest to charge a good price and make a profit on my investment and foresight? Of course, it is. Well, that's honest graft.

*Adapted from William L. Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall.*



Or supposing it's a new bridge they're going to build. I find out and I buy as much property as I can, that has to be used for the road approaches to the bridge. I sell the property at my own price later on and drop some more money in the bank.

Wouldn't you? It's like looking ahead in Wall Street or in the coffee or cotton market. It's honest graft and I'm looking for it every day in the year. I will tell you frankly that I've got a lot of it, too.

I'll tell you of another case. They were going to fix up a big park. I learned of it and went looking about for land in that neighborhood. I could get nothing at a bargain except a big piece of swamp, but I bought it right away and held on to it. What happened was just what I counted on. They couldn't make the park complete without Plunkitt's swamp, and so they had to pay a good price for it. Anything dishonest in that?

I don't own a dishonest dollar. If my worst enemy was given the job of writing an epitaph for my grave marker he couldn't do more than write:

"George W. Plunkitt. He Seen His Opportunities, and He Took 'Em."

What's important in holding your grip on your district is to go right down among the poor families and help them in the different ways they need help. I've got a regular system for doing this.

If there's a fire on Ninth, Tenth, or Eleventh Avenue, for example, any hour of the day or night, I'm usually there with some of my election district captains as soon as the fire engines arrive. If a family is burned out, I don't ask whether they are Republicans or Democrats. I don't refer them to the Charity Organization Society, which would investigate their case in a month or two and decide they were worthy of help about the time they are dead from starvation. I just get a place for them to live, buy clothes for them if their clothes were burned up, and fix them up till they get things running again. It's philanthropy, but it's politics, too—mighty good politics. Who can tell how many votes one of these fires brings me? The poor are the most grateful people in the world, and, let me tell you, they have more friends in their neighborhoods than the rich have in theirs.

If there's a family in my district that needs help, I know it before the charitable societies

do. Me and my men are the first to help. I have a special group of people to look up such cases. The result is that the poor look up to George W. Plunkitt as a father; they come to him when they're in trouble, and they don't forget him on election day.

## READING REVIEW

1. What did Plunkitt mean when he said, "I seen my opportunities and I took 'em"?
2. What methods did Plunkitt use to gain the support of his electorate?
3. (a) According to Plunkitt, what was the difference between honest and dishonest graft? (b) Do you think politicians today make this same distinction? Cite evidence from your textbook to support your opinion.

Name:

Berenson/Bartels

Date:

US/ACP

*A & E Biography: Boss Tweed*  
*Video Guide*

**Directions:** Answer the questions using the information presented in the video.

1. What connection did Sheriff Jimmy O'Brien have to William Tweed?
2. What year was the peak of Boss Tweed's career/life?
3. How many properties did Boss Tweed own? Briefly describe them.
4. Who was the cartoonist that worked for *Harper's Weekly* that exposed William Tweed's corruption?
5. List the jobs in which Boss Tweed made money legally.
6. What was Tammany Hall?
7. What was one change Boss Tweed brought to Tammany Hall?
8. Describe how Tweed built a relationship with immigrants?
9. To Boss Tweed, what did the gifts at his daughter's wedding represent?

10. List the jobs Boss Tweed had after being a firefighter.
11. As nativist views spread, how did Tweed change his political strategy to gain power?
12. List two positive changes Tweed brought to New York.
13. How did the Civil War draft disrupt New York's immigrant population-especially the Irish?
14. Describe the treatment of African Americans during the Irish draft riots.
15. What agreement did Tweed make with the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, which enabled him to appease the immigrant population?
16. Why were machine politics attractive to immigrants?
17. Tweed heavily relied on the immigrant vote. Prior to his rule:  
\_\_\_\_\_ immigrants were naturalized annually. However, in 1868 \_\_\_\_\_  
were naturalized.

### REFLECTION:

Boss Tweed is remembered as one of the most corrupt politicians; however, he also brought about positive changes in New York.

Do you think that his corrupt behavior is justified because of the benefits he brought to the poor, the immigrants, and New York City as a whole?

Is considering Tweed just another corrupt politician a fair representation?

## **Farmingville Reflection**

1. As you view the documentary, record the different perspectives on undocumented workers in Farmingville.

2. What are the pros and cons of instituting a hiring center in Farmingville?



## **United States History**

### ***Recipe for the Gilded Age***

Due: At the end of class on  
50 points

Throughout our study of the Gilded Age, we have examined the transformation of the United States from an agrarian nation to an industrial society. With this transformation came the settlement of the West, the rise of big business and labor organizations, urbanization and immigration. These events all worked together to shape the beginnings of a modern America. Your task is to create a recipe that captures a theme within the Gilded Age. You must use 6-8 ingredients, choosing at least two elements from each section, for your recipe. Keep in mind how ingredients are measured in a recipe: cups, tablespoons, teaspoons, a pinch, a dollop etc. and use the measurements accordingly.

What you will turn in (must be typed):

1. A creative title which encapsulates the theme your group has chosen to highlight.

Example: **building a business emPIEr**

2. A list of the ingredients:

- Choose what you think are the most important specific components of your theme.
- List the appropriate ingredients with their measurements.

3. The directions for making the recipe:

- Write a coherent paragraph explaining how the ingredients you've chosen are necessary to cook up your theme!!

4. The content and presentation of your recipe must be reflective of an investment of time and thought.

- Be sure to be creative in the way you choose to present your recipe.

# Recipe for the Gilded Age Rubric

	4	3	2	1
Creative Title 5	Title creatively encapsulates the theme your group has chosen. 5	Title encapsulates the theme your group has chosen. 4	Group has chosen a title which somewhat addresses your theme. 2	Group has chosen a title. 1
Ingredients 15	Group clearly identified 6-8 specific ingredients. Two from each unit section with appropriate measurements. 15	Group has identified 6-8 ingredients. Two from each unit section with measurements. 13	Groups has 6-8 ingredients with measurements. 11.5	Group has some ingredients. 10
Directions 20	Directions are clear and presented in a logical order. Each ingredient's purpose is justified/explained. 20	Directions are clear and presented in a logical order. Each ingredient is explained. 17	Directions are somewhat clear and logical. Most ingredients are explained. 15	Directions are unclear and/or illogical. Ingredients lack explanation. 13
Overall Presentation and investment of time 10	Content and presentation reflects an investment of time, thought, and creativity. 10	Content and presentation reflects thought and creativity. 8.5	Content and presentation somewhat reflects thought and creativity. 7.5	Content and presentation lack an investment of time, thought, and/or creativity. 6.5

Total Score: \_\_\_\_/50

***In partners answer the following questions:***

- 1. Common links/similarities.***
- 2. Who were targeted groups? Why?***
- 3. Dates of these acts? Any significance?***
- 4. Harshest law against immigration?***
- 5. In your opinion, which law is the most important? Why?***
- 6. From an immigrants perspective, which laws were most lenient?***



\* Read and annotate.  
- Pay particular  
attention to focus  
question below.

# Immigration in the Gilded Age: Change or Continuity?

The United States Immigration Commission, at the beginning of its well-known 1911 report, stigmatized the so-called "new immigrants"—persons who came from southern and eastern Europe, largely Italians, Jews, and Poles—as follows:

The old immigration movement was essentially one of permanence. The new immigration is very largely one of individuals, a considerable proportion of whom apparently have no intention of permanently changing their residence; their only purpose in coming to America being to temporarily take advantage of the greater wages paid for industrial labor in this country. (1).

The distinction had long been made by nativists and others. As early as 1888 Lord Bryce in *The American Commonwealth* could sneer that "new immigrants, politically incompetent" were easily corruptible (2). To be sure, the nature of American immigration changed during the Gilded Age—as it has changed during our entire history and as it is changing today. Was Gilded-Age immigration strikingly different from that which preceded it, or was it another variation in a continuously changing pattern? To answer that question, it is necessary to look at the numbers of persons involved and their origins, and to examine the sociocultural matrix in which immigrants moved.

During the Gilded Age—defined here as the period from 1871 to 1901—11.7 million persons are recorded as immigrating to the United States (3). That is considerably more than the number that immigrated to the British North American colonies and the United States in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and the first seven decades of

the nineteenth century combined, but fewer than the 12.9 million who came in the first fourteen years of the new century. The national and ethnic composition of the immigrant population did change in the Gilded Age, as it has changed throughout our history. Britons dominated seventeenth-century migration; during the eighteenth century large numbers of Africans (4) and Germans came; in the period between the 1820s and the Civil War, Germans and Catholic Irish predominated, along with a smaller but still substantial number of Scandinavians. All of the groups named above, except for Africans, continued to come in the Gilded-Age decades and were joined by immigrants from eastern and southern Europe whose previous presence had been statistically insignificant. Table 1 shows European immigration by nation/region for the three Gilded-Age decades (5).

Those 10.6 million European immigrants represented 90 percent of all immigrants. Canadians, mostly from Quebec, made up 6.7 percent, and Chinese accounted for 1.7 percent of the total. Only in the 1890s did "new" European immigrants outnumber the "old," but even then they were just barely a majority. What is rarely noticed is that the incidence of immigrants—the percentage of foreign-born in the population—was remarkably constant throughout the Gilded Age and the decades that frame it. The percentage of foreigners in the country did not vary significantly in any of the censuses between 1860 and 1920, a period justly characterized as one of rapid change in almost every other aspect of American life. Both the first and last of those censuses recorded the foreign-born as 13.2 percent of the population, while the censuses in between report percentages of 14.0, 13.3, 14.7, 13.6, and 14.7, respectively. Yet contemporaries perceived that the amount of immigration was overwhelming. These

Table 1  
European Immigration:  
Major Sources, 1871-1900

Nation/region	1870s	1880s	1890s	Total
Germany	718,182	1,452,970	505,152	2,676,304
Ireland	436,871	655,482	388,416	1,480,769
Britain	548,043	807,357	271,538	1,626,938
Scandinavia	243,016	656,494	371,512	1,271,022
Western Europe	1,946,112	3,572,303	1,536,618	7,055,033
Austria-Hungary	72,969	353,719	592,707	1,019,395
Italy	55,759	307,309	651,893	1,014,961
Russia	39,284	213,282	505,290	757,856
Poland	12,970	51,806	96,720	161,496
Southern/eastern Europe	180,982	926,116	1,846,610	2,953,708
Europe, 8 countries				10,008,741
Europe, all countries				10,562,761
All countries				11,746,190

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 1:106-07.

perceptions have been repeated by historians who have persisted in using what I call hydraulic metaphors to describe the immigration process. Immigrants are described as coming to the United States in "waves," "floods," "torrents," and "streams." One does not have to be a specialist in semiotics to understand that the habitual use of such language tends to stigmatize immigrants as the "other," rather than as the ancestors of us all (6).

But numbers, important as they are, can tell only a fragment of the immigrant story. In my American immigration history course, in which one emphasis is group comparison, I suggest that students use what I call the "immigrant paradigm" as a way to organize information. The paradigm consists of a set of questions for discussion. These questions, with some possible answers, are reproduced below.

### 1. Where did immigrants come from?

Gilded-Age immigrants came overwhelmingly from Europe, with a steady shift toward eastern and southern Europe. Germans, British, Irish, Scandinavians, Italians, and subjects of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires predominated.

### 2. Why did they leave?

As with most migrants in American history, perceived economic/social advantage was the major propulsive force, although persecution at home (including compulsory military service) was an important factor for many, especially those who were a minority group where they lived. Students of immigration often use a "push-pull"

dichotomy to describe the factors impelling persons to emigrate. The first term applies to conditions at home while the second is shorthand for the attractive factors about the destination. Push may be general (economic dislocation, war, persecution) or personal (familial division of land or other family crises, trouble with the authorities, or other dissatisfaction with life). Pull connotes the attractions of the destination. While push factors were part of immigrants' experiences, pull factors were part of their hopes, hopes that were not always realistic (7). To be sure, the factors were not mutually exclusive. Many if not most immigrants were propelled by both factors, and it is not possible to make a neat calculation of comparative forces.

### 3. How did they get here?

The development of transportation networks greatly influenced Gilded-Age immigration. As railroads—and cheaper and cheaper fares—spread through Europe, places with secure transportation to seaports multiplied. Oceanic transport changed dramatically in the years just before the Gilded Age. As late as 1856 more than 95 percent of European immigrants came to America by sail. Less than twenty years later (1873) more than 95 percent came on steamships. The chief transport innovation in the Gilded Age was the development of networks of part-time ticket agents in the United States employed by the European lines that dominated the trade. A Polish immigrant living in Detroit who wanted to bring over a relative or friend could go to a store or a saloon in the ethnic community and purchase a combination ticket from a Hamburg-Amerika Line agent that would be delivered to the relative/friend in Krakow. Such a ticket would provide rail transportation to Hamburg, accommodations in Hamburg while waiting for a ship, trans-Atlantic passage, and rail travel from New York to Detroit. While the technology was new, the end result was similar to what had been going on at least since the Great Migration of Puritans to New England in the seventeenth century.

### 4. Where did they settle?

While settlement patterns of Gilded-Age immigrant groups varied, an increasing percentage settled in urban centers. Ever since the census began listing the foreign-born separately in 1850, they have been more likely to live in cities—and especially in large cities—than the population at large. Regionally, immigrants favored the

northeastern and north central states—and by 1890, the western states—while shunning the South (8). Ethnic groups had their own patterns: Irish and Canadians favored New England, Italians and Russians the middle Atlantic states, Germans the east north central states, and Scandinavians the west north central states (9).

### 5. *What did they do?*

Because the Gilded Age was an era of expanding industrialism, most immigrants worked at industrial jobs, usually at the unskilled level, although workers with mechanical skills and training could start higher up the employment ladder. Most immigrants had to take the hardest, lowest paying, and most hazardous industrial employment. These unsung workers were, in historian Carl Wittke's phrase, "we who built America," and those who extol the achievements of industrial moguls like Andrew Carnegie ought to spend at least a little time considering the role of workers, immigrant and native-born, who created the wealth that entrepreneurs amassed. It was not just immigrant men who worked. Immigrant women and children were much more likely to be in the labor force than those who were native-born.

The agricultural sector, which had once included a majority of immigrants, still attracted a minority, most often those who came with significant resources. Even with free arable western land, which was rapidly disappearing, the costs of establishing a farm were far beyond the means of all but a few Gilded-Age immigrants. Even immigrants from groups that had been predominantly agricultural in the decades around mid-century, such as the Swedes, found mostly industrial employment toward the close of the century.

### 6. *How did they live?*

Most Gilded-Age immigrants, like their predecessors, lived in ethnic enclaves in both town and country whenever they could. There they could speak their own languages, worship with familiar rituals, and generally recreate a version of the world they had left. The Chinese were confined in parts of cities that came to be called Chinatowns as early as 1857 (10). In the Gilded Age, as the Chinese moved East, Chinatowns sprang up in places such as Butte, Montana, as well as in New York, Boston, and other cities. But, even without the rigidity of Chinese segregation, enclaves for Europeans developed with names like Kleindeutschland and Little Italy.

### 7. *In what ways did their culture change or stay the same?*

Attempts to create familiar surroundings and to maintain old cultures were largely doomed to failure. As the poet Stephen Vincent Benet remarked of seventeenth-century English immigrants:

They planted England with a stubborn trust.  
But the cleft dust was never English dust (11).

Language rarely persisted more than a generation or a generation and a half. Some food preferences continued for as long or longer, but most immigrant culture succumbed to the omnipotent American environment and the desire of children to "be American."

The great exception was religion, although that, too, underwent changes. The Roman Catholic Church became very much a workers' church in nineteenth-century America, what Jay Dolan calls an "immigrant fortress." While most Jewish synagogues still held their main services on Saturdays, Sunday and Sabbath schools developed among Reform and Conservative Jews. Similarly, Japanese Buddhists adapted Protestant hymns into songs like "Buddha Loves Me, This I Know." One of the great clashes of cultures concerned the use of Sunday leisure in which the "continental Sunday" of play collided with the "English Sunday" of prayer, often enforced by blue laws. Similar struggles concerned the use of Protestant bibles in public schools. To be sure, many Protestant immigrants supported the "English Sunday" and bible reading, but the struggle was generally seen as one of "foreigners" versus "Americans."

Each of the foregoing "answers" describe processes that were at work long before the Gilded Age began and that have continued, with somewhat different protagonists, to the present. Thus, continuity rather than change seems to predominate. But an examination of immigration policy shows an entirely different pattern. While some Americans wanted to regulate and lessen immigration even in the grossly underpopulated colonial era—so much so that a serious nativist or anti-immigrant political movement had developed before the Civil War—only in the Gilded Age did the American government begin to restrict free immigration (12).

Restriction began with an ineffective 1875 statute aimed at Chinese women (13). The first effective statute was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which did not bar all Chinese immigrants but only Chinese laborers (14). At the time there were only about 125,000 Chinese of all kinds in the United States, the majority of them in California.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was the hinge on which immigration policy turned. Within a few years America's once free and unrestricted immigration policy had been modified in a number of ways. Immigrants had to pay a small fee to enter, contract labor was forbidden, and the barred category was widened to include persons with certain physical and mental disabilities, those with criminal records, and polygamists. (The latter target comprised Mormons, not Muslims.) None of these provisions kept many persons other than Chinese out. The general purpose of government policy was still to bring more people in, not keep them out. This was symbolized by the creation of the immigration station on Ellis Island, which opened in 1892. In the previous year Congress had created the first immigration bureaucracy headed by a superintendent of immigration who supervised twenty-seven subordinates. By 1906 his successor had a staff of 1,600 (15).

This bureaucracy, often headed by former trade-union officials such as Terrence V. Powderly, was imbued from the beginning with a strong animus against immigrants. Apart from the barring of most Chinese, nativists did not win other major victories in the Gilded Age. Their most effective organization, the elite Immigration Restriction League, founded by Harvard graduates in 1894, managed

"They told us that in America the streets were paved with gold. When we got here we saw that they weren't paved at all. Then they told us that we had to pave them!"

get its pet bill, a literacy test for immigrants, through Congress in 1897. But President Grover Cleveland vetoed the bill. A congressional blockage apparently stage-managed by William McKinley's administration killed similar legislation. The literacy test was vetoed by William Howard Taft in 1913, by Woodrow Wilson in 1915, and enacted over a second Wilson veto in 1917 (16).

What conclusions are to be drawn from this brief summary? It seems to me that both continuity and change have prevailed and that it is time to discard the "old-new" dichotomy which suggests otherwise. Its continued use today can only cause confusion. If Italians, Eastern European Jews, Poles, and others who first came to America in significant numbers in the late nineteenth century are "new immigrants," what are we to call the Asians and Latin Americans who dominate contemporary immigration? Should we emulate our colleagues in the Modern Language Association and call them "post-new immigrants"? I hope not. I would argue that, from our earliest history, most free immigrants have been persons who wanted to come to America to better themselves, and that a minority of them have been persons who were fleeing some kind of persecution. As transportation and political conditions changed, so did the sources of immigration. What has changed has not been the immigrant but the nature of both America and the rest of the world.

A more appropriate system of nomenclature would place immigrants in the appropriate era and speak of immigrants as those of the colonial era, of the agricultural era, of the industrial era, and those who have come in what some call "post-industrial America." Another schema, for the era of restriction that began in 1882, would be to speak of an era of increasing restriction, 1882-1924; an era of severe restriction, 1924-1952; an era of relaxing restriction, 1952-

1980; and the present era, as yet nameless, which David Reimers describes as a "turn against immigration" (17). □

#### Endnotes

1. United States Immigration Commission, *Reports of the Immigration Commission* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991), 1:24.
2. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1889), 2:473.
3. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1975), 1:106. This volume is the source for all subsequent statistics not otherwise ascribed. Except for the Chinese after 1882, illegal immigration was statistically insignificant in the Gilded Age, but many immigrants crossing the land borders were simply not recorded. The Canadian border was more significant.
4. Some object to considering Africans, who were almost all enslaved persons, being counted as immigrants, but no one objects to using the term for the large number of Europeans who came as semi-free indentured servants.
5. For this period the immigration statistics are based on a fiscal year ending 30 June, so the table really covers 1 July 1870 to 30 June 1901. For Gilded-Age data this makes little difference, but in 1914, for example (really 1 July 1913 to 30 June 1914), it masks the effects of World War I on immigration.
6. The stigmatization of strangers is all but universal. For example, the Organizer-General of Jamaica's Afro-West Indian League insisted that Asian Indians, even those born on the island, should not be called Jamaicans "in the same way that a chicken hatched in an oven cannot be called a bread." *Jamaica Times*, 3 February 1950, as cited in Howard Johnson, ed., *After the Crossing: Immigrants and Minorities in Caribbean Creole Society* (Totowa, NJ: F. Cass, 1988).
7. An Italian-American folk saying goes something like this: "They told us that in America the streets were paved with gold. When we got here we saw that they weren't paved at all. Then they told us that we had to pave them!"
8. The regional index of immigrants (that is, percentage of foreign-born population/percentage of population) was as follows:

	1870	1890
Northeastern	1.5	1.5
North Central	1.3	1.3
Southern	0.2	0.2
Western	0.7	1.5

Source: David Ward, *Cities and Immigrants: A Geography of Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), Table 2-3, 60.

9. Ibid., Tables 2-5 and 2-6, 67, 72.
10. The first use recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes from the *Butte Record* of Oroville in California's "mother lode" country for 31 January 1857, which told its readers in a story about a New Year's celebration that "Chinatown was wild with joy."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_.

U.S. History  
Gordon

## 1876: America's Centennial

The year 1876 is remembered chiefly for the disputed Presidential Election in November, but it was, like all years, filled with events of interest and significance. The country was suffering from an economic depression and federal soldiers were still occupying some southern states, but plans to celebrate the nation's 100th birthday with an elaborate international exhibition in Philadelphia helped to divert public attention from serious matters AND simultaneously demonstrated that many Americans were looking towards the future.

For each of the following images you are to write down OBSERVATIONS: what do you see? List specific items and when possible or state in general terms your conclusion or the BIG PICTURE presented by these images.

### Image 1

*The Centennial- Balloon View of the Grounds.*

### Image 6

*Advertisements for popular inventions marketed shortly after the Centennial Exhibition.*

### Image 2

*Handkerchief with pictures of 5 of the buildings at the Centennial Exhibition*

### Image 7

*Engraving from "Frank Leslie's Historical Register of the Centennial Exposition", showing Machinery Hall.*

### Image 3

*Women's & men's fashion of 1875-1876*

### Image 8

*Chromolithograph entitled "One Hundred Years Old", published January 24, 1876.*

### Image 4

*Photograph of Washington D.C ca. 1876.*

### Image 9

*"Shall We Call Home our Troops"? Cartoon opposing the end of military occupation in the South, January 9th, 1875.*

### Image 5

*Two view of the Corliss engine in the Main Building of the Centennial Exhibition.*

**Image 10**

*"Our Artist's Dream of the Centennial Restaurants", supplement to Harper's Weekly, July 1, 1876.*

**Image 13**

*Soap advertisement using A.M. Willard's painting, "The Spirit of '76".*

**Image 11**

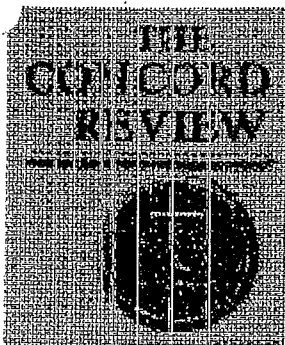
*Decoration Day (Memorial Day) in Philadelphia.*

**Image 14**

*First page of "The New Century for Women", a women's rights newspaper.*

**Image 12**

*Libograph contrasting American life-styles in 1876 with those a century earlier.*



## REFORM AND THE TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST COMPANY FIRE

Hadley Davis

Hadley Davis is a Senior at The University of Pennsylvania. This paper was done for Dr. Alan Proctor at Milton Academy, during her Junior Year, 1987/1988, and was first published in the Fall 1988 issue of the journal.

On March 25, 1911, a terrible tragedy struck New York City, a horrifying fire, claiming scores of lives at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. But the 146 people who perished in the fire did not die in vain.[1] Their deaths sparked a new flame in New York City. The pleas of the working class for better factory conditions, long ignored, were finally heard after the Triangle deaths. For those deaths stimulated a guilty concern over the state of factory safety, a concern which called for action for change. And so out of the ashes of the Triangle victims a Factory Investigating Commission was built, a Commission which over a period of four years examined thousands of industrial establishments, listened to hundreds of witnesses, held public hearings, and finally pushed through the legislation needed to reorganize the New York City labor and fire departments, and to insure safer factories for the working class.[2]

When Frances Perkins, a member of the Factory Investigating Commission dubbed the workshops and factories of the clothing industry virtual "fire and death traps," she was not exaggerating.[3] And the fire which began in Washington Square at 4:40 on Saturday afternoon, March 25, 1911, inside the Asche Building--where the Triangle Shirtwaist Company and its 500 employees occupied the eighth, ninth and tenth floors--was her testimony.

The cause of the fire was unknown, but suddenly people on the eighth floor of the Triangle Company began to cry "fire," and according to one survivor, flames seemed simply "to push up from under tables." [4] The eighth floor of the factory (like all the floors in Triangle) was overcrowded, and the sewing machine tables were crammed so close together that there was little aisle space in which to move.[5] Further, scraps of the flimsy fabric and paper patterns used to make the shirtwaists lay scattered everywhere and caught fire quickly, only aiding the spread of the flames.[6] Those on the eighth floor who were able to make an escape rushed to the stairway or pushed their way into one of the two narrow passenger elevators.[7] But within minutes, the entire floor became a

"mass of flames." [8] The girls were met at the stairs by the blaze. [9] The elevator ceased to function. [10]

The elevator never even reached the ninth floor, the biggest "fire and death trap." [11] The ninth floor was the last to learn of the fire. On the tenth where the offices were located, a phone call of warning was received and employees climbed onto the roof and managed to escape. [12] However, on the ninth, the most crowded floor, fire simply instantaneously appeared. Many jumped on machine tables. [13] Others, their dresses on fire, ran to the windows, preferring to jump rather than be burned to death. [14] Some were caught so unaware that later firemen found "skeletons bending over sewing machines," and fifty-eight girls frozen dead in the dressing room. [15] The people on nine who had the time to escape were, nevertheless, just as trapped: the door to the ninth floor was locked (to keep the girls from stealing cloth during the day); the passenger elevators never came; and the one fire escape that the building possessed quickly collapsed. [16] Desperate and with nowhere to turn, more Triangle workers dove off window ledges.

The scene outside this snare of flames was also characterized by death, as the crowd which had gathered in Washington Square watched dozens of girls hang from the building's windows and fall some eighty feet to the pavement. [17] They watched as Sophie Salami and Della Costello leapt, arms around each other, from the ninth floor; as a thirteen-year-old girl held on with her fingertips for three minutes until fire burned her fingers and she fell; as girls prayed and covered their eyes with rags before they jumped—sometimes as many as five at a time, "fire streaming back from their hair and dresses," and landed, "thud—dead" on the pavement. [18] "On the sidewalk lay heaps of broken bodies." [19] Only a few of them were injured—most were dead and many unrecognizable. [20]

According to the New York Times, "The firemen had trouble bringing their apparatus into position because of the bodies which strewed the pavement and sidewalks." [21] The bodies, said fireman Frank Rubino, "were hitting us all around." [22] But there was little help the firemen could offer the falling girls. Their ladders were not tall enough to reach the three top floors of the building, and the life nets they had were of no use. [23] For, Battalion Chief Edward J. Worth explained, the girls came down with such force that they "went right through the life nets, pavement, and all." [24] The firemen could only drag the dead bodies away and later use pulleys to remove one blackened body after another from the building's remains. [25] The New York Times reported the morning after the fire that "two girls, charred beyond all hope of identification, were found in the smoking ruins with their arms clasped around each other's necks." [26]

It was this, the drama of the tragedy, which was powerful and poignant enough to reach the public of New York and make them stop to consider their factories—that they were unsafe, that they were "fire traps."

Newspaper reporter Bill Shepherd was one who as a result of the fire paused to reflect: "I looked upon the heap of dead bodies and I remembered these girls were shirtwaist makers. I remembered their great strike last year in which the same girls had demanded more sanitary conditions and more safety precautions in the shops. These dead bodies were the answer." [27]

On November 24, 1909, 1800 waistmakers, including the workers of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, went on strike as members of the Garment Workers' Union. [28] However, the shirtmakers' demands, unlocked doors and sufficient fire escapes among them, were never met. [29]



Rather, Triangle management responded by locking out its 500 strikers and by advertising for replacements.[30] "If the union had won," explained 1909 Triangle Shirtwaist Company striker Rose Safran,

"we would have been safe. Two of our demands were for adequate fire escapes and for open doors from the factories to the street. But the bosses defeated us and we didn't get the open doors or the better fire escapes. So our friends are dead.[31]"

At the public funeral for the Triangle victims, the garment workers marched under one banner: "We demand fire protection." [32] This time they would be heard: numerous citizens ranging from businessmen to suffragists, from priests to East Side workers, met and spoke in the weeks and months following the conflagration.[33] Through these people the conscience of the city emerged. They aired a sense of public guilt and genuine concern over conditions in factories, conditions which they realized no one had previously taken enough responsibility for.[34]

The committee on public affairs, insurance and fire regulations of the New York Board of Trade, the Merchants' Association, the Public Safety Committee of the Federation of Women's Clubs, the Chamber of Commerce of New York, the Collegiate Equal Suffrage League, the Executive Committee of the Architectural League, the Board of Directors of the United Cloak, Suit and Skirt Manufacturers of New York, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, and the employer's welfare section of the National Civic Federation, all immediately held special meetings in the week following the fire, meetings in which a shared responsibility for the catastrophe was expressed.[35] C.W. Phillips, assemblyman at the National Civic Federation's Meeting, remorsefully stated that New York State, although an industrial state with thousands of factories, "has 75 game protectors in its Department of Game, but only 50 human protectors in its Department of Labor." [36] At the Calvary Baptist Church, the Reverend Dr. R.S. MacArthur spoke of a further responsibility, the responsibility of the employer. He said that employers should be responsible for "making proper exits," and should be concerned for "...the lives of those under their employ." [37] "We are responsible," asserted Dr. Anna Shaw at the gathering of the Collegiate Equal Suffrage League. "As I read the terrible story of the fire," she divulged,

"I asked 'Am I my sister's keeper?' For the Lord said to me, 'Where is thy sister?' And I bowed my head and said 'I am responsible.' Yes every man and woman in this city is responsible...you men...are responsible. As voters, it was your business...There was a time when a woman worked in the home...all that has changed. Now she can no longer regulate her own conditions. She had been left...food for the flames." [38]

The consensus amongst the people of New York was that this responsibility did have to be assumed by all, but that there had been enough talk. The worker needed to be protected, and a course of action needed to be decided upon. Anne Morgan (J.P. Morgan's niece) rented out the Metropolitan Opera House, on behalf of the Women's Trade Union League, for the evening of April 2nd, in hopes that the night would be a public assembly bringing together people from different segments of society who felt the need to unite towards a common goal--reform.[39] At the Met, workers, most of them East Side immigrants, packed the balconies, and distinguished members of society filled the orchestra seats.[40] The panel on stage was composed of prestigious leaders of the community, church, charity

and government.[41] But it was Rose Schneiderman, who had been a leader in the strike at Triangle two years before, who set the tone of the evening: "This is not the first time girls have been burned alive in this city," the East Sider told the audience.

Every week I must learn of the untimely death of one of my sister workers...the life of men and women is so cheap and property is so sacred! There are so many of us for one job, it matters little if 149-odd are burned to death...citizens...we are trying you now...[42]

"The meaning of the hour," explained Rabbi Stephen S. Wise that night, "is that the life of the lowliest worker in the nation is sacred and inviolable..."[43] To protect the life of this worker, a resolution was made at the Met, a resolution which called for the invention of a Bureau of Fire Prevention, and the addition of more fire and factory inspectors in the state.[44]

The first step towards this bureau was a twenty-five member committee to improve safety in working places which was established immediately after the Met meeting.[45] Its members included respected New Yorkers Anne Morgan, Frances Perkins, and Henry L. Stimson.[46] The nine-member commission, chaired by state senators Robert W. Wagner and Alfred E. Smith, would from 1911 to 1919 serve not only as a bureau of fire prevention, investigating fire safety in factories and eventually getting legislation passed which would prevent fire-related disasters in the future,[47] but also as a bureau on other kinds of factory safety, concerned with the health and welfare of workers in general.[48] "It was the aim of the commission to devote itself to a consideration of measures that had for their purpose the conservation of human life." [49]

The Commission took its job seriously. Within the first year of its work alone, it inspected 1,836 industrial establishments in New York and heard a total of 222 witnesses.[50] Throughout this process, it held hearings before the New York legislature and proposed new laws or amendments.[51] The legislature in turn enacted remedial legislation. The four-year term of the commission is, in fact, commonly acknowledged as "the golden era in remedial factory legislation." [52] The labor laws passed between 1911 and 1919 correspond to the Commission's findings--when the Commission discovered a problem, change ensued.

The Commission was told of Triangle: "There is no question that the emergency exits from the building were foolishly inadequate." [53] Fire Marshall Beers added, "I can show you 150 loft buildings far worse than this one." [54] At least 14 industrial buildings in New York City were found with no fire escapes at all.[55] Further, in the Triangle fire, the crowding on floors contributed to the number of lives lost.[56] According to Fire Chief Crocker, "The overcrowding of these loft buildings is a menace to life..." [57] Eventually, a series of corrective acts was passed. These laws specified that in factories there must be two exits per floor, one of these a staircase and another an interior or exterior enclosed fire escape.[58] If the area of the floor exceeded 5,000 square feet, an extra exit was required (and for every additional 5,000 square feet beyond this number, another exit was ordered), and if the building's height was over 100 feet, there had to be at least one exterior enclosed fire escape accessible from every point in the building.[59] The legislation also stated that all stairways must be fireproof (concrete or brick) and all fire escapes iron or steel, and if enclosed, enclosed by fireproof walls.[60] Just as vital was the part of the act which limited the number of occupants per floor. As a result of the law, the number of workers allowed to work in factories was

limited according to the number able to safely escape from the building.[61]

sprinkler  
system

In 1912, legislation was enacted requiring the installation of an automatic sprinkler system in factory buildings over seven stories high with more than 200 people employed above the seventh floor.[62] Fire Chief John Kenlon had previously reported to the Commission that although an automatic sprinkler system would have cost the Asche Building \$5,000, it was his belief that no life would have been lost in the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire had one been installed.[63] Similarly, it was agreed that the lack of a fire drill at Triangle caused panic when fire broke out.[64] And undoubtedly, at Triangle, where fire swept through the building without warning, a fire alarm would have insured an earlier detection of fire, and an earlier escape. Consequently, an addition to the labor law called for a fire drill at least every three months, and the installation of a fire alarm signal system in any factory building over two stories high, employing 25 persons above the ground floor.[65] Also, during the Triangle fire, scraps of fabric and paper cuttings which lay in heaps, covering the floor and tables, fed the spread of the blaze.[66] Hence, a new law ordered that all waste in factories (e.g. cuttings) must be deposited into fireproof receptacles, and that no such waste be allowed to accumulate on the floor.[67] Thirty bodies were discovered in the shirtwaist company's open elevator shafts after the conflagration, and so the New York legislature in July of 1911 dictated that all elevator shafts in all city buildings must be enclosed.[68]

Safety hazards unrelated to fire safety were also unveiled in the Factory Investigation Commission's probes. The Commission found working children, lead poisoning and industrial accidents, and insufficient ventilation and toilets in factories.[69] In response, child labor reforms were passed limiting the number of work hours for minors and prohibiting the operation of dangerous machinery by those under the age of 16.[70] Further, all industrial accidents and poisonings were required to be reported to the state.[71] Finally, "suitable and proper" ventilation and washrooms were made compulsory by law.[72]

But all the legislation was useless unless the New York State government could sufficiently continue to investigate conditions after the Commission's time was completed, and regulate and enforce the law. At the meeting at the Met in April of 1911, E.R.A. Seligman, a professor at Columbia University, referred to the city's administration as "impotent," and the truth was that the administration did, in fact, feel impotent.[73] The State of New York Building Superintendent complained to the Commission of an inadequate force of inspectors, and the fire commission's lack of power to enforce preventive measures.[74] The legislature increased the administration's influence. It dispensed a force of 125 inspectors to the labor department which had previously tried to combat violations in over 50,000 buildings in Manhattan alone with a mere 47 inspectors.[75] It also reorganized the labor department--outlined the power and duties of the department of labor, and sufficiently continue to investigate conditions after the Commission's time was completed, and regulate and enforce the law. At the meeting at the Met in April of 1911, E.R.A. Seligman, a professor at Columbia University, referred to the city's administration as "impotent," and the truth was that the administration did, in fact, feel impotent.[73] The State of New York Building Superintendent complained to the Commission of an inadequate force of inspectors, and the

The Factory Investigation Commission was successful. Not only did it manage to see passed a sheaf of legislation "the likes of which have never been seen in any four sessions of any state legislature," but it insured that the State of New York would never again be "lax" in regard to safety in

factories.[78] The change only came about through perseverance--the perseverance of the living, of the public who rallied together, of the Commission who followed through. And in the end, the actions of those whom Commission member Frances Perkins called "people in penitence," the living who knew that they had neglected action for too long, "brought about...laws which make New York State to this day the best in relation to factory laws." [79]

During their strike in 1909, the workers at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company probably sang this popular and optimistic Garment Workers' Union song:

Hail! The waistmakers of nineteen nine.

Breaking the power of those who reign;

Pointing the way, smashing the chain.

We showed the world that women could fight.

And we rose and won with women's might.[80]

Their strike in 1909 was not successful, but the Triangle waistmakers still "won." By 1914, the law, not factory owners, reigned in the garment industry, and in the manufacturing buildings of New York. Although they had died for their cause, the victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire had pointed the way towards a safer future for the working class.

#### Footnotes:

1 Frances Perkins, "Address, 50th Anniversary Memorial Meeting, March 25, 1961," cited in Leon Stein, *Out of the Sweatshop* (New York: New York Times Book Co., 1977) p. 201

2 Leon Stein, *The Triangle Fire* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1962) p. 209

3 Philip S. Foner, *Women and the American Labor Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1979) p. 367

4 Stein, pp. 34, 35

5 "Waist Factory Fire" *The New York Times* (26 March 1911) p. 5

6 The New York World, cited in Schoener, Allon, *Portal in America: The Lower East Side 1870-1925* (Canada: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967) p. 172

7 Stein, *The Triangle Fire*, p. 36

8 Stein., p. 41

9 *The New York Times*, p. 2

10 *Ibid.*, p. 2

11 Foner, p. 367

12 Stein, p. 43, 46

13 Chris Llewellyn, *Fragments From the Fire* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977)